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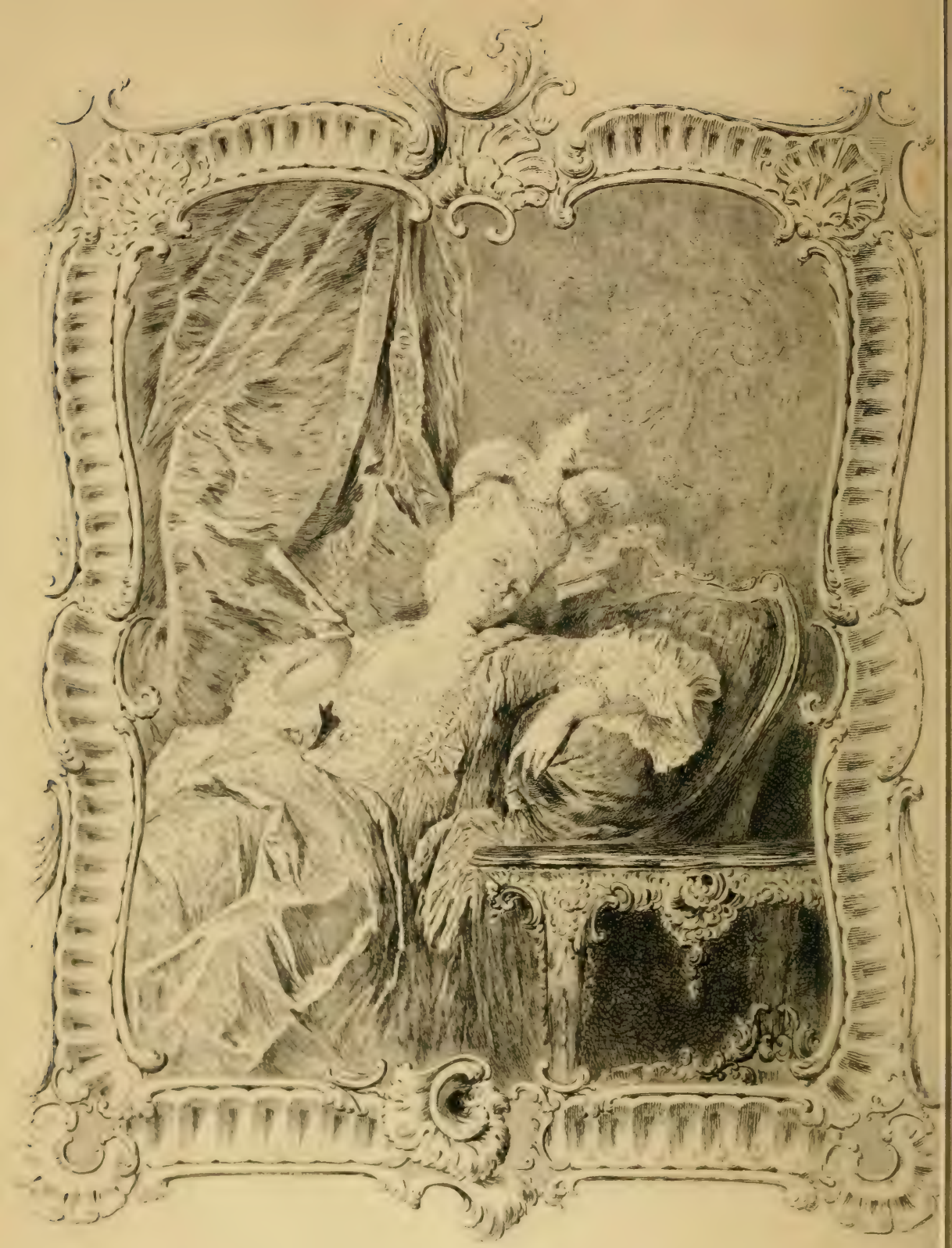

Courtiers and Favourites of Royalty

Memoirs of the Court of France
With Contemporary and Modern Illustrations
Collected from the
French National Archives

BY

LEON VALLÉE
LIBRARIAN AT THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

Memoirs of Madame du Barri

IN FOUR VOLUMES
VOL. II

[v. 2]

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Mons. de Saumay ——— Je vous fais cette Lettre pour vous dire de récévoir dans mon Château de la Bastille la Mde Berbaumont ———

——— et de l'y retenir jusqu'à nouvel Ordre de ma part, sur ce je prie Dieu qu'il vous ait, Mons. de Saumay ——— en sa sainte garde.

Ecrit à Vlles le 29. Mai 1780.

Louis

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OF
MADAME DU BARRI

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EAGERLY as I longed to hear the explanations of the Duc de Choiseul, I felt but little inclination to enter upon terms of friendship with him. I knew well that he had used every art to circumvent my plans, and had called to his aid the assistance of a certain M. Delisle, an officer and man of letters, of humble birth, possessing as little virtue as talent. This Delisle was commissioned to overwhelm me with epigrams and songs, circulated amidst the first circles, despite their coarseness and disgusting style. Possibly these last-named qualities were but an additional reason for their being so universally read and quoted. However, M. de Choiseul, finding that all his schemes failed to injure me in the King's opinion, adopted another plan; and upon this occasion he sought the assistance of a justly celebrated man, M. de Voltaire, whose pen was employed, not to insult me, but to recommend a treaty of peace with the Duke. It was

easy to perceive, from the tone of the letter and a poetical epistle which accompanied it, that both had been written at the instigation of the Choiseul cabal. I regret that I cannot give you here a copy of them, as they were stolen from me, probably by some admirer of M. de Voltaire. The letter was a masterpiece of wit and elegance; for the peculiarity of circumstance under which my correspondent addressed me appeared to have given more grace, delicacy and freedom to his pen. As for the verses, all I now recollect of them is that M. de Voltaire very flatteringly apostrophised me as Venus! There was nothing in them at all worthy the high reputation of their writer; and any of our second-rate poets, M. de la Harpe or M. Marmontel, could have equalled them without much effort. And here I will candidly avow that, in spite of the excellent taste and tact possessed by M. de Voltaire, he never appeared to me to comprehend the art of praising. I trust I shall have your pardon if I venture to say that M. de Voltaire never could have succeeded in administering praise or compliment, from the total absence of that good-nature and genuine warmheartedness which are equally as essential as tact or taste. His compliments always appear to me tinged with malice, and he seems, even when offering them, to be jesting with the person to whom they are addressed, as well as acting against his own wishes and intentions. Perhaps these remarks may seem to you, my friend, both unnecessary and unreasonable; and as I am not disposed to insist upon their justness, I will change my subject.

About this period I received a piece of attention anything but gratifying, if considered in a strictly honourable sense. The contemptible Chevalier de la Morlière, who detested me, and subsequently pursued me with rage, presumed to dedicate to me some wretched collection of his compositions, and I had the weakness to accept the dedication. I had even the still greater folly to receive its author at my house. This piece of condescension injured me greatly. Until that period I had not, like Madame de Pompadour, shown myself the protectress and patroness of men of letters, and even my

warmest friends could not deny that in stepping forward as the encourager of literature I had made a very unfortunate choice in selecting the Chevalier de la Morlière as the first object of my patronage. But how could I have done otherwise? The Prince de Soubise, who found this man serviceable upon many occasions, would have sacrificed anything to promote his advancement, and I have been assured that had the Marshal taken half the pains on the day previous to the battle of Rosbach we should not have left it so disgracefully.

The King well knew the unfortunate Chevalier for a man as destitute of modesty as merit. When, therefore, he saw his book upon the mantelpiece of my drawing-room, he said:

"So you are the inspiring muse of the Chevalier de la Morlière. I only warn you, when the day comes for him to be hanged, not to ask me to pardon him."

"Be assured," replied I, "that I will never deprive the Place de Grève of one so formed to do honour to it."

In fact, the Chevalier was within an ace of reaching it before his friends anticipated, for very shortly after this conversation he was guilty of the most detestable piece of knavery I ever heard of. He learned that an unfortunate young man from the country, into whose confidence he had wormed himself, was to receive 15,000 livres on his father's account. He invited him to supper, and, by the aid of two villains like himself, stripped him of his last sou. Not satisfied with this, he wrote the father such an exaggerated account of his son's loss and general bad habits that the enraged and irritated parent procured an order to confine his son at St. Lazare! Did you ever hear of a more infamous and accomplished rogue than my honourable *protégé?* However, I shall give him up to his fate, be it good or bad, and proceed with the relation of my affair with the Duc de Choiseul.

I had named to Madame de l'Hôpital the hour at which I could receive the Duke. She had requested, in pursuance of her directions, no doubt, that the conversation between

us should take place either amidst the groves of Versailles or in the labyrinth of Marly, the self-love of M. de Choiseul inducing him to desire that this interview should be so contrived as to wear the air of a mere chance *rencontre*. To this I would not consent, saying that it did not suit my pleasure to quit the house, and that when a gentleman solicited the favour of speaking to a lady it became his business to wait upon her, without expecting she should come in search of him, and, in spite of all the arguments of Madame de l'Hôpital, I persisted in my determination. She had no alternative but to submit, and I awaited the coming of M. de Choiseul on the following day.

The Duc de Choiseul possessed a greater reputation than his talents were entitled to, and his advancement was more attributable to his good fortune than his merit. He had found warm and powerful assistants in both philosophers and women. He was a confirmed egotist, yet passed for a man who cared little for self. He was quick at matters of business, and he obtained the character of a deep and profound politician. It must, however, be admitted that he was witty, gallant, and gifted with manners so elegant and fascinating that they never failed to remove the first unfavourable impression caused by his excessive plainness. The tide of public favour was with him; and, in order to contest it, it required all the influence of a woman, and that woman to be no less than the beloved mistress of the King of France.

He presented himself before me tastefully and magnificently dressed, both look and voice wearing the stamp of high-born pride and haughtiness. Nevertheless, amidst all this pomp, it was evident that he did not entirely feel the ease he assumed, and that a species of remorse rankled at his heart, notwithstanding the courtier-like gallantry with which he had invested himself.

"Madam," said he, bowing twice most profoundly, "the moment has arrived which I have long most ardently desired."

"The fault has not been mine, my lord," said I, "that it

has been delayed until now. My door has never been shut against any visit you might have honoured me with."

"Ah! madam, why have I not known this sooner? Some evil planet ruled my thoughts when it occurred to me that I might not be so happy as to meet with a favourable reception."

"There, my lord, you were indeed in error; for though I might not feel a very tender friendship towards you whilst supposing I had many causes for complaint, I could not refuse you those marks of respect your rank and station entitle you to receive."

"Then, madam, I may flatter myself that I should have been kindly received?"

"Yes, sir, you would ever have been welcome. But not those belonging to you, for I will be perfectly candid—always excepting the Duchesse de Choiseul, for whom I entertain the greatest veneration and respect."

"She is indeed well worthy the exalted opinion you express of her, and had I followed her advice I should not have been found amongst the ranks of your enemies."

"You confess the fact, then, M. le Duc?" said I.

"I trust, madam, you will not take advantage of an inadvertent expression to turn it against myself. What I fear is that, without ever having been your enemy, I may have passed for such in your estimation; and such indeed is the cruel position in which I am placed."

"Stay! my lord Duke," cried I; "be candid, and acknowledge that you are my enemy, as you have ever been, and that it is only because there has been war between us that you have now come to conclude a treaty of peace."

"Peace or war, madam," replied he, "as you please to will it; all I will admit is that things have turned out most unfavourably for my wishes. Your arrival at Versailles, your grace, beauty and wit excited universal jealousy; and amidst the general panic caused by your all-excelling merit, was it not necessary that I, too, should keep myself on my guard? For the first time in my life a beautiful woman became an object of alarm to me. You may further believe

me when I protest that, at the outset, I warmly defended you. But how could I wage war against so many? how oppose the general torrent? It bore me down."

"And you fear lest it should carry you beyond your depth and would fain return to *terra firma*. Is it not so, my lord Duke?"

At this ironical speech an expression of heavy displeasure rose tc the countenance of M. de Choiseul. He remained for several minutes like a man who fears to trust himself to reply, then added:

"Madam, when I solicited the favour of this conversation it was with the sincerest desire of adjusting all differences between us, and it would but ill advance that purpose were I now to reply to you with warmth and petulance. Condescend, on your part, to lay aside sarcasm and raillery. You have already too many advantages over me, and it would ill accord with your wonted generosity to insult a half-conquered foe."

"You are right, my lord," answered I; "jests and recrimination will effect nothing; let us rather proceed at once to consider what is best for the interests of both."

"Willingly," replied he. "Now you speak to the purpose; and as I was prepared to hear you, are you inclined for a serious discussion of our business?"

"Pray begin, my lord; I am all attention."

"Well, madam, I deeply regret all that has passed, and deplore that my friends and part of my family should be disagreeable to you; I take upon myself to engage that their hostility shall end, and am willing to afford you the most perfect satisfaction upon this point. Impressed with the highest respect for His Majesty, and the most lively desire to serve him, I ask for nothing more than to be on good terms with those he loves; and as for the future, my unshrinking loyalty may be relied on."

"I am well assured of it, my lord Duke; and likewise that you have never taken any part in the calumnies which have been aimed at me. Let us, then, forgive the past; and since we are agreed as to the future, let us speak but of the present. I have friends fitted to serve the King, whose ambition leads

them to aspire to that honour. What will you do to assist them?"

"Ere I promise that, madam, it is necessary I should be acquainted with them."

"What would it avail to name them to you? You perfectly well comprehend to whom I allude. I am resolutely decided to support them, and to employ for this purpose the friendship with which His Majesty deigns to honour me."

The Duke coloured deeply at these words.

"Then, madam," said he, "you would fain strip me to enrich others?"

"No, my lord, I ask but a division of your possessions. You cannot have everything; and it would not be fair that our reconciliation should be profitable to you only."

"I did not anticipate, madam, in coming hither, that you would command me to offer up myself as a sacrifice upon an altar raised by you to the interests of your friends."

"Meaning to say, my lord Duke, that you will keep everything to yourself. I cannot compliment you upon your liberality, however much I may for your candour."

"Madam, I have never since my entry into the Ministry sought to live at the expense of my country; and, let me resign my office when I may, I shall retire loaded only with debts, whilst you and your friends draw large revenues from the nation."

The conversation became warm and angry; the Duke and myself, with crimson cheeks and inflamed countenances, surveyed each other with haughty defiance. At length he added:

"I had hoped that I should have quitted you more kindly disposed towards me."

"And I, my lord, fancied that you were coming with an ardent desire for peace; but no, the spirit of your sister leads you astray, and you would fain punish me for her absence from Court."

"Madam, I beseech you, leave my sister in peace; she has gone—that ought to satisfy you. We will not, if you please, speak of her."

"I only wish that she would likewise do me the honour to

be silent respecting me. I am not ignorant that she continues to aim her slanders at me from afar as she did when near me. One might suppose that the sole object of her journeyings was but to excite all France against me."

"Madam, you are mistaken. My sister——"

"Continues to play the same part in the country as she did in Paris. She detests me because I happen to have youth and beauty on my side. May her hatred last for ever."

"Ah! madam, say not so; for with your charms you are indeed too formidable an antagonist, and the more so as I clearly perceive you are not inclined for peace."

"At least," said I, "the war on my side shall be fair and open, and those belonging to you have not always waged it with me upon those terms."

The Duke merely warded off this last assertion by some unmeaning compliment, and we separated greater enemies than ever.

The first person to whom I could communicate what had passed was the Duc d'Aiguillon. He listened to my recital without any decided expression of his opinion; but no sooner had I concluded than he took me by the hand and pressed it with a friendly grasp.

"How I congratulate you," said he, "upon the good fortune which has extricated you from this affair. Do you know that a reconciliation with the Duc de Choiseul would have involved your inevitable disgrace? What evil genius counselled you to act in such a manner?"

"I fancied I was doing right," said I, "in thus proving to the King that I was not an unreasonable woman."

"The Choiseuls," replied he, "would have entangled you in their nets, and, separated from your real friends, would have made you the innocent author of your own destruction. Tell the King just so much, that the Duc de Choiseul has been to see you, that you conversed together some time, and that he has offended you more than ever."

"I promise you, my kind friend," said I, "to follow your advice."

When next I saw the King I apprised him of the visit.

"That does not astonish me," said Louis XV. "The Duke is anxious to be on friendly terms with you."

"He has, then, taken a very contrary road to arrive at my friendship," said I. "If he really desires that we should be on good terms, he must conduct himself very differently." And there the conversation ended. But several days afterwards, having sent away my *maître d'hôtel*, with whom I had reason to be dissatisfied, and the King appearing surprised at seeing a fresh countenance amongst my household, I said to him, "Sire, I have got rid of *my* Choiseul; when will it please you to get rid of yours?" The King, without replying to me, began to laugh; in which, for want of a better termination to my remark, I was constrained to join.

CHAPTER II

Dorine—Mademoiselle Choin and the Maréchal d'Uxelles—Zamor— M. de Maupeou's wig—Henriette—The Duc de Villeroi and Sophie —Letter from Madame du Barri to the Duc de Villeroi—His reply —The Countess writes again—Madame du Barri and Sophie—Louis XV. and Madame du Barri.

Among the number which composed my household were three beings who played conspicuous parts in my establishment, and who received the kindest caresses in honour of their mistress. These three favoured objects were Dorine, Zamor and Henriette. Following the order—or disorder—in which I have written thus far, I will first introduce my dear Dorine to your notice.

Sweet, beautiful Dorine! how amiably affectionate and attached to thy mistress wert thou! The poor animal still exists. For I would have you know that I am speaking of a most faithful little dog—now, indeed, grown old, asthmatic and snappish, but, fifteen years since, distinguished for her lightness, swiftness and grace; for her pretty little countenance, white teeth, large sparkling eyes, long tufted tail, and, above all, for her snow-white coat, spotted here and there with the most beautiful brown.

Dorine was just three months old when Madame de Montmorency brought her to me in her muff. Her throat was adorned with a rich gold collar, bearing the Du Barri arms and clasped with a large sapphire surrounded with diamonds. The moment she saw me, Dorine leaped upon my lap with the most endearing familiarity, and from that period has never quitted me. My train of courtiers likewise hastened to become those of the new favourite; and pastrycooks and confectioners racked their brains to procure

tempting morsels for the gentle Dorine. She sipped her coffee daily from a golden saucer, and Zamor (between whom and Dorine a mutual dislike existed) was appointed her cupbearer. The wonderful instinct of the highly-gifted animal soon taught her that although she had free permission to bark at all the rest of the world, there was one person in it to whom it behoved her to show herself in her most gracious and smiling moods. Who this person was I leave it to your sagacity to divine. She, however, indemnified herself for this extra complaisance by barking and biting at all who approached; and the handsomest, best turned leg in the Court was not secure from the sharp teeth of Mademoiselle Dorine. Nevertheless, all vied in praising and fondling her, and I was enchanted with the general admiration she excited, as well as the attention she received. One day, when exultingly relating to the Duc d'Aiguillon the cares and praises lavished on my dog, he replied, "The Grand Dauphin, son of Louis XIV., after the death of his wife, Marie Christine of Bavaria, secretly espoused Mademoiselle Choin. The Maréchal d'Uxelles, who was not ignorant of this marriage, professed himself the most devoted friend of the lady. He visited her regularly morning and evening, and even carried his desire to please her so far as to send a servant with a dish of grilled hare for the house-dog, who had a particular fancy for game dressed in that manner. These attentions and assiduities were faithfully continued for several years till the Grand Dauphin died, and then—no more morning and evening visits, no more presents to either mistress or dog. Apply the story well," added the Duke, as he terminated his recital. Unfortunately the application of the tale presented itself but too soon, and I have experienced the sad truth of the history of Mademoiselle Choin. At the death of the King so did my visitors disappear; and poor Dorine has partaken of the disgrace of the Comtesse du Barri.

The second object of my regard was Zamor, a young African boy, full of intelligence and mischief; simple and independent in his nature, yet wild as his country. Zamor fancied himself the equal of all he met, scarcely deigning

to acknowledge the King himself as his superior. This son of Africa was presented to me by the Duc de Richelieu, clad in the picturesque costume of his native land—his head ornamented with feathers of every colour, a short petticoat of plaited grass around his waist, while the richest bracelets adorned his wrists, and chains of gold, pearls and rubies glittered over his neck and hung from his ears. Never would anyone have suspected the old Marshal, whose parsimony was almost proverbial, of making such a magnificent present.

In honour of the tragedy of *Alzire* I christened my little negro Zamor, to whom by degrees I became attached with all the tenderness of a mother. You ask me why? Indeed, that is more than I can tell. Perhaps at first I looked upon him as a sort of puppet or plaything, and then, imperceptibly to myself, became passionately fond of my little page. Nor was the young urchin slow in perceiving the ascendency he had gained over me, and, in the end, in abusing his influence; and he attained, as I have before said, an almost incredible degree of insolence and effrontery. Still, I pardoned all his folly, and amused myself from morning to night with watching his nimble fingers perform a thousand tricks of jugglery. Even now that I have lost the gaiety of my happy days, when I recall his irresistibly comic ways, I catch myself laughing like an old simpleton at the bare recollection of his monkey feats. I could relate twenty of his mischievous pranks, each more amusing than the other. I will, however, excuse you from hearing nineteen of them upon condition that you shall listen to the twentieth, which I select as being the shortest.

One day, upon which I had invited some select friends to dinner, a superb pie was brought to table. It was a present which the ungallant M. de Maupeou had had the politeness to send me in the morning. One of the company proceeded to cut it, when scarcely had he pierced the crust than its perfidious contents proved to be an immense swarm of cockchafers, which spread humming and buzzing all over the chamber. Zamor, who had never before seen these insects, began to pursue them all over the room, buzzing and humming as loudly as they did. The chase lasted a

long time; but at last the poor cockchafers, weary of carrying on the war, and mistaking the peruke of M. de Maupeou for an impregnable fortress, flew to take refuge there. What did Zamor do but run to the Chancellor, snatch off his wig, and carry it in triumph to a corner of the room with its colony of cockchafers, leaving us all to admire the bald head of the chief magistrate. I could willingly have enjoyed a hearty laugh at this scene, but, out of respect for M. de Maupeou, I feigned to be much displeased with Zamor, whom I desired one of the attendants to flog for his rudeness. However, the guests and the Chancellor uniting in entreaties that I would pardon him, I was obliged to allow my assumed anger to give way to their request, and the culprit received a pardon.

There was but one person in the world whom Zamor really feared; he was, however, on good terms with all my friends, and did not disdain the society of the King. You have heard that the latter, by way of amusement, bestowed on my little negro the title of Governor of the Pavillon de Lucienne, with a revenue arising therefrom of a thousand crowns, and that the Chancellor caused the necessary papers to be prepared and delivered to him sealed with the State seal.

But of all the persons who visited me, the one most beloved by Zamor was Madame de Mirepoix, who never came without bringing him amusing presents or some sweetmeats. The sight of her threw him into ecstasies of delight; and the moment he caught sight of her he would clap his hands, leap with joy, dance around her, and kiss her hand, exclaiming, "Ah! Mame la Chale!" (Ah! Madame la Maréchale). The poor Maréchale always dreaded meeting the King when she came to visit me and Zamor; for the great delight of His Majesty was to make my little negro repeat a name of Israelitish origin, which he did in so ridiculous a manner that the modesty of my fair friend was most shockingly put to the blush.

One person alone never vouchsafed to bestow the slightest glance of encouragement upon my little imp of

Africa, and this was Comte Jean, who even went so far as to awe him into silence either by a frown or a gesture of impatience. His most lively tricks could not win a smile from the Count, who was either thoughtful or preoccupied with some ambitious scheme of fortune. Zamor soon felt a species of instinctive dread of this overpowering and awe-inspiring genius, whose sudden appearance would chill him in his wildest fits of mirthful mischief, and send him cowering to a corner of the room, where he would remain huddled together and apparently stupefied and motionless till the Count quitted the apartment.

At the moment of my writing this Zamor still resides under my roof. During the years he has passed with me he has gained in height, but in none of the intellectual qualities does he seem to have made any progress; age has only stripped him of the charms of infancy without supplying others in their place: nor can I venture to affirm that his gratitude and devotion to me are such as I have reason to expect they should be;[1] for I can with truth affirm that I have never ceased to lavish kindness on him, and to be, in every sense of the word, a good mistress to him.

There was one member of my establishment, however, whom I preferred either to Dorine or Zamor, and this was Henriette, who was sincerely attached to me, and who, for that very reason, was generally disliked throughout the Castle. I had procured a good husband for her, on whom I bestowed a post which, by keeping both himself and his wife in the close vicinity of the Castle, prevented my kind friend from quitting me. However, my poor Henriette was not fated to enjoy a long connubial felicity, for her husband, being seized with a violent fever, in a fit of delirium threw himself from a window into the court below and was taken up dead. Slander availed herself even of this fatal catastrophe to whisper abroad that the death of the unhappy man arose from his deep sense of his wife's misconduct

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1 This wretch, whom the Comtesse du Barri loaded with her favours and benefits, conducted her to the scaffold.—Ed.

and infidelity. This I can positively assert was not the case, for Henriette was warmly and truly attached to him, and conducted herself as a wife with the most undeviating propriety. The fact was that Henriette had drawn upon herself a general hatred and ill-will because she steadily refused all gossiping invitations, where my character would have been pulled to pieces and the affairs of my household discussed and commented upon: there, indeed, she had sinned beyond all hope of pardon.

She it was who pointed out to me the perfidious conduct of the Duc de Villeroi. This gentleman from the very beginning of my rise in the Royal favour had demonstrated the most lively friendship for me, of which he sought to persuade me by the strongest protestations, which, weak and credulous as I was, I implicitly believed, until one day Henriette, availing herself of my being quite alone, let me into the secrets of my establishment, and furnished me with a key to the assiduities of M. de Villeroi.

Amongst the females in my service was one named Sophie, young, beautiful both in face and form, of a sweet disposition, and every way calculated to inspire the tender passion. M. de Villeroi felt the full force of her charms, and became the whining, sighing lover—her very shadow. Up to this period I had had no cause of complaint against M. de Villeroi, and certainly I should not have interfered with his plebeian flame had he not thought proper, when questioned by my enemies as to his continual presence at the Castle, and great assiduities there, to protest that his visits thither were not in honour of my charms, but for those of my waiting-maid. However, my vanity had rendered me his constant dupe.

I felt perfectly astonished as I listened to Henriette's recital, and when she had ceased I conjured her to tell me candidly whether she had not invented the whole tale either out of spite to Sophie, or with a design to make me break off further friendship with the Duke. This she most solemnly denied, and recommended me to make enquiries amongst my friends, who would be compelled to bear tes-

timony to the truth of all she had asserted. I determined to do so, and the first person whom I was enabled to interrogate respecting the affair was the Bishop of Senlis. This prelate came frequently to see me, and I found his society each day more pleasing. He served me as a kind of gazette of all that passed with the Princesses, in whose opinion I had still the misfortune not to be in the very highest estimation. When occasion required it, M. de Roquelaure would venture to take my part, and that without making a single enemy—for who could be offended with one so good, so affable, so full of kindness towards all? In fact, the worthy Bishop was so fortunate as to obtain the love of every person who knew him, and, in the most select society of opposing parties, each would reserve a place for good M. de Roquelaure.

When I questioned him as to his knowledge of the affair, his embarrassment was evident.

"What a world is this!" cried he. "Why, let me ask, do you listen to those who repeat such mortifying tales to you?"

"Because, my lord, my friends will not see me made the sport of a heartless and perfidious friend; and, if you entertain the slightest regard for me, I conjure you to tell me all you know upon the subject."

"And do you, my good madam, conceive that it would become my sacred calling to speak ill of my neighbour? Besides, surely you would not attach any belief to the idle reports spread about the Castle by ill-disposed persons?"

"All this has nothing to do with my question, my lord," resumed I. "I ask you once again, whether you ever heard the Duc de Villeroi assign his passion for one of my women as the reason of his visits to me? Have you, my lord Bishop? I entreat your answer."

"Madam, I have not," said the good prelate, colouring deeply.

"Ah! M. de Roquelaure," cried I, "you must not say Mass to-morrow, for I greatly fear you have just committed a certain fault which is styled fibbing."

The Bishop made no reply, and his silence spoke volumes of confirmation.

Scarcely had he quitted me than the Duc d'Aiguillon entered, to whom I put the same question; and he frankly confessed that the excuse alleged to have been used by the Duc de Villeroi was strictly the expression of that gentleman.

"I was wrong," said the Duke, "not to have mentioned it to you, but I was silent from a desire to preserve peace between you. Now that the affair has been revealed to you, I will not sully my lips with a falsehood for the pleasure of upholding an unprincipled man."

"I will not ask you to tell me more," replied I. "I know enough to make me despise the cowardly spirit of him whom I reject as unworthy of my friendship." So saying, I ran to my writing-table and wrote to the Duc de Villeroi the following note:

"MONSIEUR LE DUC,—I love my friends, with all their faults, but I cannot pardon their perfidy; and since, from what I have heard, I am left to conclude that, but for the charms of my attendant, Sophie, I should not have been favoured with so many of your visits, I now write to warn you that I, this day, dismiss the unfortunate object of your admiration from my service, and therefore recommend you to cease all further communication. Your presence in my house would be anything but agreeable to me; and since the fair object which has hitherto attracted you will no longer dwell under my roof, I presume your presenting yourself before me would only be more painful than you have hitherto found it. The frankness of my conduct may offend you, but it cannot surprise or grieve you more than your duplicity has pained me.—I remain, with befitting sentiments, Monsieur le Duc, your most humble and obedient servant."

When I had completed my letter I rang, and a footman attended. "Go," said I to him, "carry this note immediately to the Duc de Villeroi, and wait, if it be necessary, the whole day, until you can return with the assurance that you have delivered it into his own hand."

Whilst I was thus speaking to the man, who had been engaged by my steward and had but recently entered my service, I chanced to look at him inadvertently, when my attention was arrested by seeing him rapidly change colour. I could not at the moment conceive what could thus agitate him, and making a sign for him to depart immediately upon

his commission, he slowly left the room, regarding me as he went in such a manner that I could not fail to recognise him. And here, my friend, I must lay aside every particle of self-love and vanity ere I can make you a complete confession. The retrospect of my life brings many events of which the remembrance is indeed painful to me, and only the solemn promise I am under to conceal nothing restrains me from consigning many particulars to oblivion. I am once more about to incur the chance of drawing down your contempt by my candour, but before I enter upon the subject, permit me to conclude my affair with the Duc de Villeroi.

My letter was a thunderbolt to the Duke. He, better than anyone, knew the extent of my credit, which he dreaded, lest I might employ it to his injury. He therefore hastened to reply to me in the following words:

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—I am a most unhappy, or rather, a vilely calumniated man, and my enemies have employed the most odious means of making me appear despicable in your eyes. I confess that, not daring to aspire to you, I stopped at the footstool of your throne; but I wholly deny the words which have been laid to my charge. I venture to expect from your justice that you will grant me the favour of an opportunity of exculpating myself from so black a charge; it would be cruel indeed to condemn a man without hearing him.—I am, with the most profound respect, &c."

To this hypocritical epistle I replied by another note, as follows:

"Every bad or unfavourable case may be denied, Monsieur le Duc; therefore I am not astonished at your seeking to repel the charge of having uttered the disrespectful words laid to your charge. As for the explanations you offer me, they would be fruitless. I will have none with those who have either been my friends or appeared to be such. I must therefore beg you will cease all attempts at a correspondence which can lead to no good results.—I have the honour to remain, &c."

After this business was despatched, I caused Sophie to be sent for to attend me.

"Well, Sophie," said I, "you perceive the confusion you have occasioned through your folly. Is it then true that the Duc de Villeroi has spoken of love to you?"

"Yes, indeed, madam," replied the poor girl, weeping bitterly.

"And you return his passion?"

"I believe so, madam."

This naïve confession made me smile. I continued:

"Then you are not quite sure of the fact?"

"No, madam; for when I do not see him I forget all about it. But when he is before me—so handsome, and so generous—so full of love—I try to make myself equally fond of him; but somehow I cannot help preferring his courier, M. l'Eclair."

These last words completely destroyed all attempts at preserving my gravity, and I burst into the most uncontrollable laughter, which, however, soon gave place to a painful recollection of how soon this young and artless creature, as simple as she was beautiful, was likely to lose this open-heartedness in the hands of her seducer.

"Sophie," said I to her at last, "this unfortunate affair forbids my retaining you longer in my service; I am compelled to send you from me. I trust this noble lover of yours will never forsake you. Take care, however, to conceal from him, should you persist in encouraging his addresses, that he has a rival in the person of his courier, l'Eclair."

Sophie threw herself weeping at my feet. I raised and encouraged her by the kindest words to pursue a right path, but I remained steady in my determination of sending her from me.

I was not mistaken. The Duc de Villeroi became the possessor of poor Sophie, and publicly boasted of having her under his protection. He did not, however, proceed to these extreme measures until he had essayed every possible means of effecting a reconciliation with me, and he employed more than a hundred persons in the vain attempt of inducing me to pardon him. With this view the Maréchale de Mirepoix, whose succour he had implored, observed to me that it was sometimes necessary to feign to overlook an insult. I replied that dissimulation was an art I knew nothing of, nor did I wish ever to acquire it.

"Really, my dear Countess," cried she, "you should not live at Court; you are absolutely unfit for it."

"It may be so," replied I; "but I would rather quit

Versailles altogether than be surrounded by false and perfidious friends."

All the remonstrances of the good-natured Maréchale were fruitless. I could not bring myself to pardon a man who had so openly outraged my friendship.

Directly I saw the King I related the whole affair to him.

"It must be confessed," said he, "that the Duke has behaved very ill towards you; but he has certainly shown his taste as far as regards Sophie. She is a sweet creature."

"Ah! you are all alike," cried I. "You gentlemen think a pretty face an excuse for every fault; and he only deserves blame who can attach himself where beauty is wanting."

"Because he is a simpleton for so doing," said Louis XV. with the utmost gravity, giving me at the same time an affectionate embrace.

CHAPTER III

The Prince des Deux Ponts—Prince *Max*—The Dauphin and Marie Antoinette—The Comtesse du Barri and Bridget Rupert—The Countess and Geneviève Mathon—Noel—Fresh amours—Nocturnal adventure—Conclusion of this intrigue.

ALL my friends were not equally as treacherous as the Duc de Villeroi; and I may gratefully assert I have possessed many true and sincere ones, who have ever faithfully adhered to my fortunes. One in particular I shall mention here, that I may recommend him to your warmest esteem; for, although of high and distinguished rank, he did not despise the good opinion of the meanest citizen. I speak of the Prince des Deux Ponts—Charles Auguste Christian. This Prince, who chanced to visit France during the zenith of my Court favour, was very desirous of seeing me, and both he and his brother were presented to me by the Comte de la Marche, their friend, and they quickly requested the honour of my friendship. Auguste Christian pleased me most by his gentle and amiable manners, although most persons gave the preference to his brother, Maximilian Joseph, better known by the name of Prince Max. Auguste Christian, in the fervour of his attachment, speaking openly to me of the delicacy of my situation, proposed to me, in case of any reverse, that I should seek an asylum in his dominions; and I must do him the justice to say that at the death of the King, far from forgetting his proffer, he lost no time in reminding me of it. Fidelity and attachment such as his is sufficiently rare to merit a place in my journal. The Prince des Deux Ponts was heir presumptive to an immense inheritance—that of the electorate of Bavaria and the electorate Palatine, to the latter of which he was direct heir after the decease of his cousin, the present

Elector. I could almost wish that he had already succeeded to these possessions: he can never reign too soon for the happiness of his subjects.

Prince Max had served in France. He was extremely well looked upon at Court, both by the King and the Princesses. As for the Dauphiness, prejudiced against him as she was by her mother, she naturally regarded him with an eye of cool mistrust, and manifested her open dislike by never inviting him to any of her parties. Prince Max spoke of this pointed neglect to the King, who immediately summoned the Dauphin. "My son," said he to him, "I see with regret that Prince Max is never an invited guest at any of your balls and fêtes. Remember, he belongs to a family which has been our most ancient ally; and do not take up the quarrels of a house which, until your marriage, has ever been opposed in deadly hatred to us."

If the Dauphin was not gifted with a very extensive capacity, he was possessed of sufficient plain sense to comprehend and to enter into the views of his grandfather, to whom he pledged his word that henceforward Prince Max should be treated with more respect. And he kept his word, for the instant he returned to his apartments he commanded the Duc de la Vauguyon to add the name of Prince Max to the list of invited persons. When the paper was drawn out it was carried to the Dauphiness, who was with her husband. She read on till she came to the name of Prince Max, which she desired should be erased; but the Dauphin interfered. "Oblige me," cried he, "by suffering this name to remain; his ancestors have for ages been the friends of our family, and his alliance may one day be useful to us in Germany."

The Dauphiness comprehended the signification of these words, and her fine eyes were filled with tears. However, she no longer insisted on the erasure, when her husband, who most tenderly loved her, further declared it to be the King's desire that nothing should be done which could in any way displease the Prince des Deux Ponts. He was, therefore, from that period invited to the house of Marie Antoinette, who indemnified herself for this compulsory civility by re-

fusing to bestow upon him one single smile or gracious word. It must indeed be agreed that the Dauphiness had brought with her into France too many Austrian notions, which she was long in losing for those of a wife and mother; but now, at the moment of my writing this, she is much changed, and is as true a Frenchwoman as though she had been born and bred in Paris. Unfortunately, the people appear slow in giving her credit for her altered opinions, and to this mistake will she owe the loss of that general love and popularity to which she has such just claims.

Prince Auguste Christian entertained for me a sincere regard, which I returned with the truest friendship. My feelings were as pure and simple as his own, in spite of the odious calumnies with which my enemies have attacked this harmless acquaintance; but their slander in this matter was no worse than the manner in which they spoke of every person who visited me. According to their report, I was the mistress of all who presented themselves. 'Tis well for you, ye courtly dames, that you may convert friends into lovers with impunity; be the number ever so large, none dares arraign your conduct; but for those of more humble pretensions it is indeed considered atrocious to number more than two admirers; should we ask to swell the list to a third—what comments, what scandal, what vilifying reports are in circulation!

In this letter, my friend, I shall speak to you exclusively of myself. You will find little in my conduct to praise, and, I fear, much to blame. You will easily perceive my heart was better than my head; and, dear as your opinion is to me, I write on in the hope that, should my candid avowal lose me any portion of your esteem, it will yet obtain me a larger share of your friendship.

The dismissal of Sophie from my service occasioned a vacancy in my household. Immediately her departure was known I received numberless solicitations from all who heard of it. Three days afterwards Henriette came to inform me that the wife of an attorney of Châtelet solicited the honour of serving me in Sophie's stead, and that she was a good-

looking and respectable person, and might very probably suit me.

"Will you see her, madam?" continued Henriette. "She is recommended by the Marquise de Montmorency."

"Willingly," answered I. "Desire her to come in."

Henriette left me and quickly returned, introducing the new candidate.

At the first glimpse I recognised Bridget Rupert, that haughty girl who had been my early friend and companion at St. Aure, but who found it impossible to continue her friendship and favour to a humble milliner's girl. The sight of her occasioned me a surprise by no means of a pleasing nature; and the involuntary start I gave evidently recalled me to her recollection. In a moment her cheeks assumed the paleness of death, and her self-love seemed to suffer the most horrible torments at the light in which our *rencontre* mutually placed us. As soon as she could command herself sufficiently to speak, she cried:

"Ah! madam, do I, then, appear in your presence?"

"Yes," replied I, "before the poor and humble milliner to whom you so harshly refused your friendship!"

"Fortune has well avenged you, madam," said Bridget, in a melancholy tone; "and as I can easily imagine how unpleasant the sight of me must be, I will hasten to relieve you from it."

These last words touched me, and restored me in a degree to my natural good temper.

"Bridget," said I to her, "after the little affection you have ever manifested for me, it would be impossible as well as unwise to take you into my service; but let me know in what way I can best promote the interests of yourself and husband, and I pledge myself to accomplish it for you."

"I thank you, madam," answered she, resuming her accustomed haughtiness. "I came to solicit a situation near the person of the Comtesse du Barri. Since that is refused me, I have nothing more to request."

"Be it as you please," replied I.

Bridget made me a low curtsey and quitted the room.

Henriette, who had been the witness of this scene, expressed her apprehensions that I should be displeased with her for introducing an unwelcome visitor to me.

"No," cried I, "'tis not with you I am vexed, but myself."

"And why so, dear madam?"

"Because I reproach myself with having in my own prosperity forgotten one of my earliest and dearest friends, who loved me with the tenderest affection. Possibly she may now be in trouble or difficulties from which I might have a thousand ways of relieving her. But it is never too late to do good. To-morrow, early, you shall set out for Paris; when there, go to the Rue St. Martin and enquire for the sign of 'La Bonne Foi'; it is kept by a pastrycook named M. Mathon, of whom I wish you to learn every particular relative to his daughter Geneviève."

My wishes were laws to Henriette, who instantly retired to prepare for her journey. I had not ventured to desire her to glean any information concerning the brother of Geneviève, and yet at the recollection of the handsome Nicolas my heart beat impetuously. With what impatience did I await the return of Henriette! At length she came.

"Well?" said I.

"I have found out M. Mathon," answered Henriette.

"Which—the father?"

"Yes, madam."

"And what is his present occupation?"

"As usual, madam, superintending his kitchen and shop."

"Is he alone in his business?"

"Oh, no! madam; he is assisted by his son, a fine, dark, handsome young man."

"His son, then, lives with him?"

"Yes, madam, and he is married."

"Married! But it is not of this young man I wish to speak, but of his sister — of Geneviève; tell me of her."

"I only learned, madam, that she had married a tailor named Guérard, who, after having been very unsuccessful in

business, died suddenly, leaving her wholly destitute, with two young children."

I immediately wrote the following note to my early friend:

"The Comtesse du Barri, having heard of the misfortunes of Madame Guérard, and, knowing how much she is deserving of a better fate, is desirous of being useful to her. She therefore requests Madame Guérard will call on her next Monday, at two o'clock, at her hotel, Rue de la Jussienne."

Poor Geneviève nearly fainted when she received this note, which was conveyed to her by a footman wearing my livery. She could not imagine to whom she was indebted for procuring her such exalted patronage, and she and her family spent the intervening hours before her appointed interview in a thousand conjectures on the subject. On Monday, punctually at two o'clock, she was at the hotel dressed in her best, her lovely countenance setting off the humble style of even her holiday garb. She knew me the instant she saw me; and, in the frank simplicity of her own heart imagining she could judge of mine, ran to me and threw herself into my arms, exclaiming:

"Oh, my dear Jeannette, what pleasure does it afford me to meet you again. Oh! I see how it is—you are the friend of the Comtesse du Barri, and it is to you I shall owe my future good fortune, as I do this present mark of her favour."

"No, my good Geneviève," cried I, weeping for joy, "she who now embraces you is the Comtesse du Barri."

After we had a little recovered ourselves I took my friend by the hand and led her to a sofa, where we seated ourselves side by side. Returning to the scenes of our early youth, I related to Geneviève all that had occurred since—my adventures, faults and favour. When I had concluded my recital Geneviève commenced hers. But it was soon told: there is little to relate in the life of a woman who has passed her days in the virtuous discharge of her duties.

Our mutual confidences being over, and having again exchanged a most affectionate embrace, I put into the hands of my companion a portfolio containing 30,000 livres in bank

bills. I promised her likewise to obtain for her some lucrative situation. "Do more than this for me!" cried Geneviève. "Since you will still grant me your friendship, secure for me the happiness of occasionally meeting you. I can with truth declare that of all your proofs of kindness and regard that which I most prefer is the pleasure of seeing you."

This ingenuous request touched my heart, and I replied to it by fondly caressing the warm-hearted Geneviève, and assuring her that my purse and my house should be ever open to her. We then resumed our interesting reminiscences, and Geneviève was the first to speak of her brother. At the name of Nicolas I felt the blood mount to my very forehead, and an indefinable sensation passed over me at the mention of him who had possessed my virgin love. I strove, however, to conceal from my friend the powerful emotion which agitated me, and I replied, with apparent tranquillity, that I should be happy to assist her brother with the best of my credit and influence; and I kept my word by obtaining for him, at the solicitation of his sister, some lucrative situation, the exact nature of which I do not now recollect, where they resided together in ease and comfort. I had only to recommend them to the notice of M. de Boulogne, who felt himself much flattered at being selected by me to make the fortunes of my two *protégés*.

From this time Geneviève visited me as frequently as she could, and her society delighted me, whilst in her conversation I found a frankness and sincerity which I had vainly sought for at Court. She had loved me when a simple milliner, and she cherished the same fond regard for me in my improved situation. Her friendship has not forsaken me in my reverses; and I feel quite assured that death only will dissolve the tender friendship which still subsists between us. As for her brother, he spared me much shame and confusion by never seeking my presence: a meeting with him would indeed have overwhelmed me with painful recollections.

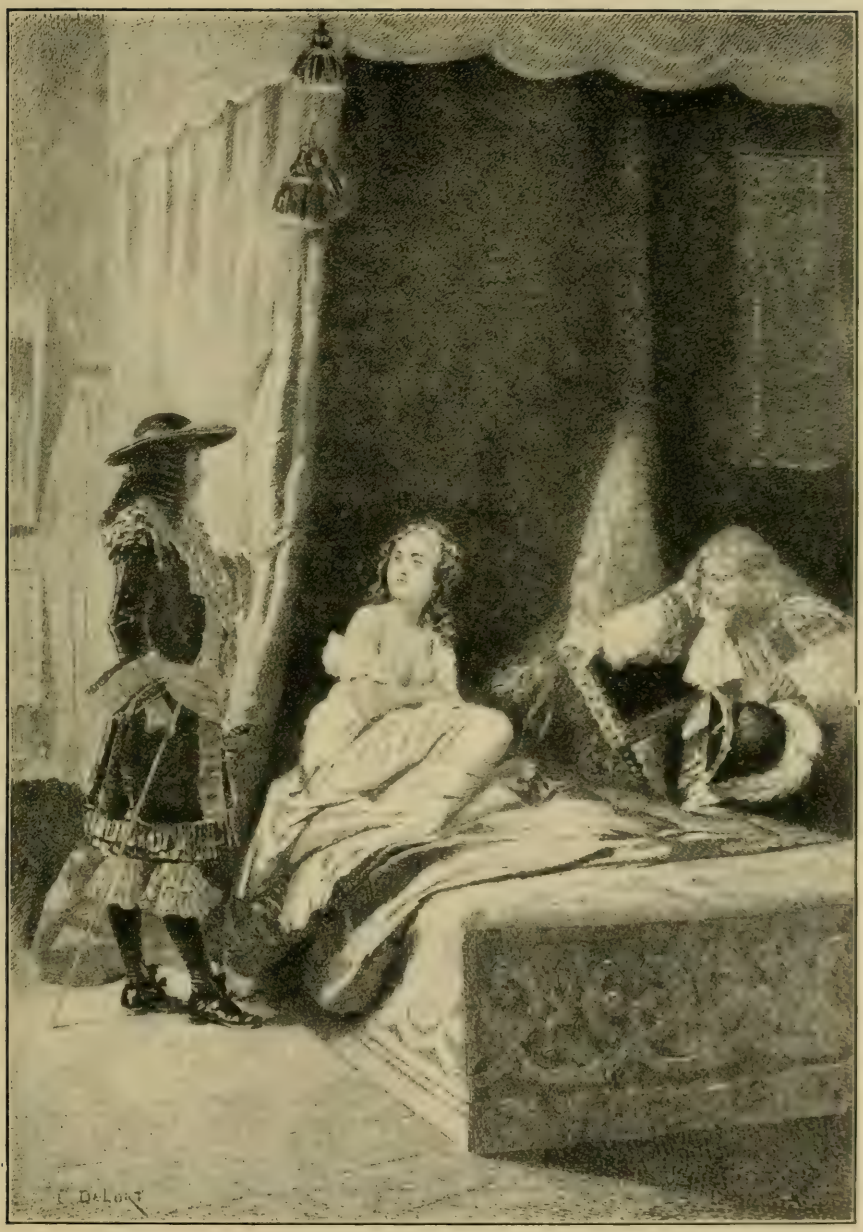
And now, my friend, I am about to relate to you an adventure, the bare mention of which covers my cheek with guilty blushes. Fain would I conceal it from you, but my

promise is given to lay my whole heart before you, and it shall be done, cost what it may.

I know not why it should ever have been permitted you gentlemen to frame laws which, while they permit you in the gratification of your passions to descend ever so low in the scale of society without any disgrace attaching itself to you from the obscure condition of the object of your search, to us females it is prohibited, under penalty of incurring the utmost degradation, to gratify the inclination of our hearts when awakened by one of more humble rank than our own. A great lord may love a kitchen-maid, a noble duke, like M. de Villeroi, may indulge his fancy for a waiting-woman, and yet lose no portion of his dignity or of the esteem in which the world holds him; but, on the other hand, woe to the high-born dame who should receive the homage of an obscure citizen, or the noble countess who should lend a favourable ear to the sighs of her *valet de chambre.* The public voice would loud and angrily inveigh against so flagrant a breach of decorum. And why should this be? But, my friend, do you not see in my seeking to defend so weak a cause sufficient intimation that such a justification involves a consciousness of requiring it? Alas! I plead guilty, and will no longer delay the painful confession I have to make.

Do you remember a singularly handsome young man, who, during my abode with Madame Lagarde, fascinated me till my very senses seemed bewildered by my passion. You know how he betrayed me, and how, through him, I was expelled the house, as well as the termination of this foolish adventure. You are now to pass over seven or eight years, and take your place with me in the drawing-room in which I stood when I rang to summon a servant to convey a letter to the Duc de Villeroi. You may remember what I told you in the last chapter of the person who entered, of his agitation and change of colour, and of his fixing his eyes with deep meaning upon me till he quitted the room—this servant was Noel!

Had I listened to the dictates of prudence I should,


C. DeLort

without loss of time, have obtained against him a *lettre de cachet*, which would have freed me from all chance of discovery through his means; but I could not listen to such cold-blooded, though cautious suggestions. One idea only took possession of my mind—the absurd desire to know what had become of Noel since we separated, and by what accident I now found him wearing my livery in the Castle. With this intent I availed myself of the first moment I was secure from interruption to summon him to my presence. He threw himself at my feet, imploring me to pardon his audacity. "Alas! madam," said he, "I am more unfortunate than guilty. I saw you walking some time since, and I could obtain no rest or peace till I was fortunate enough to obtain admission to your establishment. Punish me for my temerity if you will—expel me from the Castle, have me confined in a prison, I deserve it all; but, voluntarily, I cannot leave this house; and if you will only permit my stay, I solemnly vow you shall see nothing in my conduct but the zeal of an attached and respectful servant."

I was weak enough to pardon Noel, and shortly after to raise him to the rank of *valet de chambre*, which brought him infinitely too much about me.

Yes, my friend, the woman is, after all attempts to excuse it, blamable for bestowing her affection on one below herself in the scale of society. Nature herself appears to have planted in our bosoms a kind of instinct, which warns us from it, and a prejudice against all those who so degrade themselves. It is different with men. They can confer rank and elevation on the beloved object. A woman should always have reason to look up to and feel proud of the man to whom she consigns her heart. This species of vanity is mixed with the noblest love, and the woman who can overlook it acts from passion of the lowest, basest kind. How easy is it to reason! Alas! why have I not always acted as well as I speak?

I was thus a second time enthralled by Noel, and much more so, too, than I will now tell you. My faithful

Henriette, whose devoted attachment to me kept her ever watchful of my safety and reputation, was thunderstruck at perceiving what I vainly strove to conceal from her, and—as she has since told me—was long in deciding whether to speak to me of the affair, when an unexpected incident arose, which determined her, at every risk of my displeasure, to use her endeavours to put an end to so disgraceful a connection, which must infallibly have ended in my disgrace.

One night, or rather midnight, all was at rest in the Castle, and I was sleeping peacefully in the arms of Noel, when all at once I was awakened by the sudden opening of an outer door, which announced to me the approach of the King, who had merely one more door to open ere he would be in my apartment. Noel, terrified, leaped quickly out of bed, and ran to seek refuge in a small chamber adjoining, where Henriette slept. Happily she was yet awake, and, by the light of a night-lamp, or *veilleuse*, recognised Noel, who, with clasped hands, conjured her to take pity upon him. Henriette saw the danger, and putting out her hand, seized him, and drawing him rapidly towards her, made him lie down beside her. Noel, struck with her goodness, was preparing to offer her the same marks of his gratitude he had shown me of his respect; but repulsing him, she said in a low voice: "Wretch, think not it is on your account I thus expose my reputation—'tis to save that of my beloved mistress. Either conduct yourself with silent respect, or you are lost." At this threat Noel's courage melted away, and he lay as still as a frightened child. "Listen," said Henriette; "if you do not quit this place to-morrow at break of day, without seeking to see madam again, I will denounce you to the King, who will inflict upon you the most dreadful punishment."

Whilst these things were passing in the chamber of Henriette, I did not feel perfectly at ease on my side; and many were the wise reflections I made upon my folly, and many the resolutions I formed never again to expose myself to such imminent danger. Nor did my terrors abate till after

the King had quitted me. At the sound of my bell, Henriette hastened to my bedside.

"My good Henriette," said I to her, trembling from head to foot, "what a night of anxiety have I passed. I must indeed confess——"

"Fear not, my beloved mistress," replied she; "I will watch over your safety, and trust to be enabled fully to provide for it."

I durst not then ask for any further explanation of her words, for such was the ascendency her good and steady conduct had given her over me that she would certainly have blamed me for my glaring imprudence. I pressed her hand in mute thankfulness; she comprehended my silence and left me to myself.

At the end of some days, seeing nothing of Noel, I ventured to question her as to his fate. She then related to me all you have been told, and added that the day following this shameful and unfortunate night she had lost no time in apprising Comte Jean of all that had occurred, who had quickly despatched Noel out of the kingdom, furnishing him with a purse of 10,000 livres to defray his travelling expenses. Such was the fortunate termination of this disgraceful affair. And now, having completed my painful confession, I will change the subject to others doubtless more calculated to interest you than the recital of such lapses.

CHAPTER IV

The Chevalier d'Arc and Madame de Langeac—Letter from the Chancellor to Madame du Barri—Reply—Letter from Madame du Barri to the Duc d'Aiguillon—His answer—Curious particulars relative to the conference in which the destruction of Parliaments and the Choiseuls was agreed upon—Bond of agreement between the Chancellor and the Duc d'Aiguillon—A hint relative to the poisoning of the Dauphin, son of Louis XV.—The Abbé Terray—The Duc de la Vrillière—The Duc de Richelieu—The Duc de la Vauguyon—The King's remark concerning Madame Louise.

I HAVE too long abandoned the recital of those events which, while they assured the triumph of the Duc d'Aiguillon, hastened the fall of the minister Choiseul. I now hasten to resume the proper thread of my narrative, and I forewarn you that the period of which I now am about to write is far more important than that of which I have already written.

The decree of the Parliament of Paris was not long in being followed by those of several other Sovereign Courts, who believed themselves equally competent to pass sentence upon a duke and peer. The most universal clamour arose against the Duc d'Aiguillon, and it might have been said that the kindness of the King's feelings towards this nobleman had excited all France against him. The poor Duke most acutely felt this general expression of dislike, yet, at the very moment when the Parliamentary storm was raging with its utmost violence on his devoted head, he was seen exhibiting himself at the splendid fête given by the Chevalier d'Arc to Madame de Langeac, or, more correctly speaking, to the Duc de la Vrillière. Possibly the Duke's intention in taking this step, which appeared as though done to brave his enemies, might have been merely to conceal the deep chagrin he felt from their machinations.

The Chevalier d'Arc was the favoured lover of Madame de Langeac, formerly Madame Subretin. The Duc de la Vrillière was well aware of their reciprocal attachment, which did not give him the slightest uneasiness. He certainly was the silliest or the vilest of men, receiving the Chevalier d'Arc at his house, and appearing at all the fêtes he gave; he even carried his folly so far as to endeavour to outdo him in tender attentions to his (the Chevalier's) mistress. What I am asserting is no overdrawn picture. I speak the positive fact, as you will see; and when, in 1772, the follies of the Chevalier had drawn down upon him an inevitable exile, it was with the utmost agony and despair that M. de la Vrillière signed the requisite *lettre de cachet*. His friends, coming to condole with him, surprised him in tears. "Alas!" cried he, before them all, "what will poor Madame de Langeac think of me? I am about to wring her heart. Yet the fault is not mine; I but obey the positive mandate of the King, which I have opposed as much as I was able."

Such a character appears to me truly ridiculous. I never saw the Duc de la Vrillière without experiencing a strong desire to laugh heartily. Had he not been the nephew of the Duc d'Aiguillon, I verily believe I should have indulged my inclination. However this may be, it is certain that the fête given by the Chevalier formed the general topic of conversation throughout Paris, and my poor friend was universally blamed for his effrontery in appearing at it. I was included in the same disapprobation, and came in for a share of the many epigrams written upon the occasion.

During these discussions I received the following letter from the Chancellor:

"My dear Cousin,—Could you spare me an hour to have some conversation with you upon several matters of import? I flatter myself that you will not refuse my request when the interest of your friends, their happiness or disgrace, is at stake. I should be most happy if M. le Duc d'Aiguillon would make a third in our party."

I returned for answer:

"My dear Cousin,—You are certainly the most gallant Chancellor that France has ever boasted of; but you possess one other quality which I admire even more than your gallantry: that of your devotion

to your friends. Be assured I shall have great pleasure in devoting as many hours as you please to the business you speak of, and shall expect you to-morrow at twelve. I think you have no council on that day, and will consequently be at leisure. Should, however, the hour I have appointed be an inconvenient one to you, favour me by naming any other, which, you may rely upon it, will be faithfully obeyed by me.—Yours," &c.

When I had despatched this letter, I lost no time in writing to the Duc d'Aiguillon:

"My Lord,—To-morrow, at twelve o'clock, I shall be most happy to see you if you are not better engaged. Not that I have anything very important to say to you; but there is in the world a certain gentleman of the long robe who is very anxious to discuss affairs of consequence to you with me in your presence. Come, then, I entreat of you, to dictate to me what I shall say."

The Duke replied:

"I shall not fail, madam, to attend your orders for to-morrow; not with a view to dictate, but prepared to admire beforehand whatever the spirit of your benevolence shall inspire you to advance in my behalf. You are my favourable star, my guardian angel, whose divine protection saved my poor barque from the rocks which would otherwise have dashed it to pieces. Dispose of me as you will, my whole life will be too short to prove my gratitude."

On the following day both the Duke and the Chancellor were faithful to their appointment. The Duke arrived first; his impatience had made him outstrip the hour. He spoke to me of the fears with which my note had inspired him, of his dread that the Parliaments of Paris would unite against him, and he enquired my opinion. I could give him no further information on the subject than that he already possessed, and both of us awaited with no small impatience the coming of him who could clear up our doubts. The Chancellor soon arrived, and after the usual salutations, which I made as brief as possible, I abruptly demanded of M. de Maupeou his reason for desiring us to meet. "Do not imagine, madam," said he, "that it has reference to any matter of moment, it merely concerns three mere trifles: *primo*, to dismiss the present minister, the Duc de Choiseul; *secundo*, to procure the Duc d'Aiguillon to be his successor; and, *tertio*, to overthrow every Parliament in the kingdom."

The avowal of these three purposes drew from me an involuntary cry, and the Duke replied, in a gloomy tone:

"It would be more than equal to the labour of a dozen Hercules."

"It shall be accomplished by me alone," said the Chancellor. "I who am no Hercules will accomplish it, provided you, madam, will do me the favour to submit the memorial you see before you to the King, and to support it with your utmost influence."

Thus saying, he put into my hands a large roll of paper tied round with a black riband. I pointed this last circumstance out to the Chancellor with a sort of superstitious dread.

"It has happened entirely by chance," replied he, "and is merely prophetical of the downfall of your enemies."

"Perhaps of your own," cried the Duc d'Aiguillon, with a mournful shake of the head.

"Hope better things," resumed M. de Maupeou. "The King regards you and listens to your opinion. I have some share in his confidence, and my fair cousin there can mould him as she will; and, by the blessing of God, we shall triumph. But, in order to effect so desirable a conclusion, we must first arrange our plan of action, and then proceed to carry it into execution by inspiring the King with jealousy and mistrust of his minister, and then embroiling him in a perpetual rupture with his Parliaments, beginning with those of Paris."

After having thus spoken, the Chancellor looked at us in silence.

"Well, my good cousin," said I, "what is to be the preliminary step in this momentous business?"

"This, madam: that we shall mutually explain our motives and views in entering upon the affair; for, after all, self-interest will be the fundamental principle of our alliance. Deign, my lord Duke, to state explicitly your own reasons and wishes for engaging in the transaction."

"M. de Maupeou," rejoined the Duke, "I will be as candid as yourself, and explain, in a few words, why I am ready to join heart and hand in your project. In the first place, I am

most anxious to extricate myself from my present disagreeable situation; and that, I know well, can never be achieved whilst the Duc de Choiseul remains minister, and so long as the Parliaments of Paris can reckon upon his aid and influence. Consequently, I have strong reasons for desiring the downfall of both the Duke and the Parliaments; and, to effect these ends, I pledge myself to support you, with my utmost power, in whatever scheme you shall concert against them."

"Very well," replied M. de Maupeou. "But, to go further, how far would it suit your ideas to enter into a strict alliance with me that should endure even in the prospect of your being called to the Ministry? for I will not conceal from you that my interest is materially concerned in such a measure."

"I am willing to accept whatever proposition you may make me to that effect."

"Let us, then, engage, by a reciprocal promise, mutually to support each other so long as we shall remain at the head of affairs, and to quit them together in such a way that the disgrace of one shall be the signal of retreat to the other; excepting always, what is very unlikely to be the case, that either of us should voluntarily desire to resign the administration."

This proposition appeared to me wholly in favour of the Duc d'Aiguillon, for M. de Maupeou was, in fact, really in the Ministry, whilst the Duc d'Aiguillon, smarting under the weight of a heavy accusation, could scarcely hope to become so. Nor was the latter slow in accepting the treaty.

"Well, then," exclaimed the Chancellor, "I will draw out a written agreement to that effect, which we will each of us sign"; and, immediately placing himself at my writing-table, he drew up the following engagement, which the Duc d'Aiguillon copied, merely changing the names:

"I, the undersigned, Nicolas, René Charles-Augustin, Chevalier and Chancellor of France, promise to the Duc d'Aiguillon, in the event of his becoming minister, to support him with my best power and interest; and, should he be compelled to resign, I engage at the same time to give up my office of Chancellor, as well as minister, without con-

sidering myself exempted by any consideration—not even His Majesty's most sacred command—from the fulfilment of the solemn engagement I now enter into with him, declaring myself a dishonoured and worthless man if I fail in this my promise."

These agreements having been dated, signed, and enclosed in an envelope, sealed with the arms of the Duke and M. de Maupeou, the latter placed them in my hands, requesting I would take charge of them until M. d'Aiguillon should be appointed by the King to the Ministry; then I was to deliver to each the written engagement of his colleague. The Chancellor then resumed the subject of his further plans; and so much was I struck with what he said that I availed myself of the moment of their quitting me to copy it into my journal, from which I now transcribe it for your perusal, my friend, in nearly the same words employed by M. de Maupeou.

"The Duc de Choiseul is our greatest and, apparently, most difficult enemy to overcome; nevertheless, the task may be less impossible than it appears upon a first view. The King no longer cherishes any regard for him, but retains him in his office from the impression that he is useful as well as devoted to the interests of monarchy. These ideas it must be our task to efface from the mind of His Majesty, and we may employ two methods of accomplishing this end. In the first place, we may represent him as encouraging the Americans, in a clandestine manner, to hostilities against England, our ally; as embracing the Austrian party with a zeal so excessive as to leave strong cause for suspicion; and, further, as carrying on his intrigues within the Royal dominions by driving the Parliaments to rebel against the Sovereign authority. The Duchesse de Grammont may, unknown to herself, be brought to aid our schemes against her brother; for that purpose we must effect her recall to Court. I am well informed that, in several towns, she has visited the Parliamentarians, to whom she has promised the protection of her brother. Upon her return to Versailles she will doubtless offer to the Duc de Choiseul the aid and assistance of the Parliamentarians. All these proceedings, with every unguarded word which

escapes her, must be carefully collected and brought to the King; then we will strike our last blows; I, in the course of my ministerial capacity with the King, and you, madam, during the familiarity of your conversations with His Majesty. There is nothing our monarch would not listen to from your lips, were it even the charge of having been the instigator of the murder of the late Dauphin."

"What!" exclaimed I, "shall I dare to wring the heart of my kind and confiding master by so detestable a falsehood?"

"Not so entirely a falsehood," replied the Chancellor, "as you may suppose it. Are you acquainted with all the circumstances which preceded the death of this most excellent Prince? Right or wrong, whichever way you may term it, the unfortunate Dauphin was much attached to the Jesuits, whom he firmly believed necessary, or at least useful, to the welfare of the nation. Consequently, their banishment, effected by Madame de Pompadour and the Duc de Choiseul, became a serious grief to him, nor did he ever pardon this latter the part he had taken in the business any more than the infamous suspicions with which he had filled the King's mind relative to the assassination of Damiens. The Prince, although deeply irritated by these vile calumnies, undertook the defence of the Jesuits; and even forgot his rank so far as to intercede for them with the Duc de Choiseul. The insolent reply he received completed the exasperation of his mind; and, in his just anger, he threatened the Duke with his resentment so soon as he should ascend the throne. 'My lord,' answered the Duc de Choiseul, 'I may have the misfortune to become the subject of Your Royal Highness, but most certainly I will never be your servant.'

"No one would presume to insult the heir of a kingdom thus boldly if he had not previously resolved to proceed to the greatest extremities. However this may be, from that moment, the health of the Dauphin began to languish and droop. He died, and his premature end excited in the minds of all men the most violent suspicions. The son of the unfortunate Prince, our present august Dauphin, is in full

possession of all these facts, and well knows on whom to avenge the death of his father. You perceive that all this is not so very improbable as to forbid your conversing with the King respecting it, and certainly this is not the first time you have heard it spoken of."

I then recollected what I had heard from M. de Richelieu during the fêtes given in honour of the marriage of the Dauphiness; and I replied that I did indeed remember hearing something of the same sort from the uncle of the Duc d'Aiguillon.

"Avail yourself of it, then, to promote our common interest," pursued the Chancellor; "and, above all, when the Duchesse de Grammont shall be returned—to effect which you must immediately exert all your energies—you must more particularly show yourself alarmed by these fresh intrigues. Well, my lord Duke, what think you of all this?"

"That you are a wonderfully clever man," replied the Duc d'Aiguillon. "We may reckon much upon the extravagancies Madame de Grammont will inevitably commit, and not less so upon the errors which the Parliaments of Paris and the provinces will not fail to be guilty of. Their obstinacy will offend the King, who, as you know, dislikes all exposure or angry scenes as much as he dreads satire and ridicule."

"Oh," replied the Chancellor, with a sardonic smile, "there is little fear of the Parliaments making a jest of these things; they are much more likely to carry things with too high a hand to stoop to lampooning or epigrams."

"Would the time were already arrived," exclaimed the Duke, "when the King, by striking some decisive blow, might disconcert the machinations of my enemies against me!"

"To accomplish that," answered M. de Maupeou, "we shall require the assistance of our lovely Countess; and I trust that, by following our united counsels, she will be enabled to extricate you from your present unpleasant situation." And, following up his speech by immediate action, the Chancellor proceeded to trace out for me a plan of conduct replete with the greatest skill and talent.

M. de Maupeou possessed a peculiar genius for all that is usually designated intrigue. His enemies have depreciated his powers too much. No ordinary man would have ventured to attempt the ruin of the whole magistracy: to accomplish so daring a work a more than common capacity, as well as a superior courage and audacity were requisite. I think there is little doubt but that M. de Maupeou will be much more highly spoken of by posterity than by his contemporaries.

In addition to the written bond subsisting between them, M. d'Aiguillon and the Chancellor bound themselves by the most solemn assurances of mutual fidelity; and, I must say, from that moment up to the accomplishment of their enterprise, they acted with the most remarkable sincerity. Our league was shortly after strengthened by the addition of two powerful auxiliaries, the Abbé Terray and the Duc de la Vrillière.

The Abbé Terray had two powerful reasons for joining us. The first was, the hatred he bore to the Duc de Choiseul, despite his having entered the Ministry with him; and the second originated in the dislike he entertained for the magistracy, of which he had once been a member, although a treacherous and perfidious one. His fears of these two powers induced him to unite his forces to those of the Duc d'Aiguillon and M. de Maupeou, although, in his heart he felt no regard for either one or the other.

The Duc de la Vrillière had the same deeply-rooted aversion to the Duc de Choiseul; and, like the Abbé Terray, joined our party principally with the view of gratifying his revengeful schemes. The Choiseuls held the Abbé in the most sovereign contempt, and continually played off some trick at his expense, to the great amusement of the whole Court. At the precise period of which I am speaking, they had circulated against himself and his dearly-beloved Madame de Langeac a smart epigram, which had been most successful in its reception. In it they asserted that the old libertine had asked in marriage the hand of the young and lovely Mademoiselle de Polignac, and that his old mistress was furious at such flagrant infidelity. As this little production may

not have reached you, I trust you will pardon me for inserting it in my narrative.

"Des cafés de Paris l'engeance fablière,
Qui raisonne de tout, *ab hoc et ab hâc.*
Sur ces prédictions redigeant l'almanach.
Donne pour femme à la Vrillière,
La fille du beau Polignac.
Ah! si l'ingrat avait jamais cette pensée,
S'écria Subretin se frappant l'estomac,
J'étranglerais comme une autre Médée,
Tous ces Philippotins soi disant de Langeac.

The author of these lines was the same Delisle who had already exercised his poetical talents at my expense; and it must be confessed that they were the best he ever produced.

Then the Duc de Richelieu and the Duc de la Vauguyon joined us. The former detested the Duc de Choiseul as much as he had loved his former mistress. M. de Choiseul had deeply offended the Marshal by instituting a comparison between him and the famous Duc d'Epernay. Besides, it was highly disagreeable to him to receive the petty honours of a favourite without any of the power; and, in spite of his advanced age, which precluded his admission into the Ministry, and every other obstacle which barred his way, he still trusted to be summoned to the management of public affairs.

The same ideas actuated the Duc de la Vauguyon. The religious party indeed supported the minister, but they had little influence with the King. Vainly had they sought to strengthen their interest through the intervention of Madame Louise. This Princess since her profession of a holy life had not been able to exercise a greater degree of authority over the mind of her father than before her seclusion. Louis XV., speaking of her to me, said, one day, "My poor child has been the dupe of these hypocritical Jesuits, and they were only desirous of wheedling her into a cloister that she might assist them to ascend my throne. However, they will miss their purpose, for I will neither submit to be led by her or by them."

I am perfectly assured that the King was at last brought to fear and abhor the Jesuits.

CHAPTER V

The Comte de Maillebois—Comte de Broglie, Minister of the Secret Police—The Comtesse du Barri procures the recall of the Duchesse de Grammont—The Countess and the Duc de Choiseul—The King and the Comtesse du Barri—The Parliaments—Louis XV. in Council—Louis XV. and the Duc de Choiseul—The Countess and the King.

To the confederates, of whom I spoke in my last letter, may be added the Comtes de Maillebois and de Broglie. The former, son to the Marshal of the same name, had high pretensions. Proud of the courage which he had displayed in 1756 at the taking of Port Mahon, and subsequently during the campaigns in Germany, he looked at the direction of the War Department as a property unjustly detained from him. Had M. de Choiseul thought proper to have bestowed upon him the office of M. de Praslin, all would have been well; but as the Duke had the unpoliteness never to offer it him, he was compelled to throw himself into our party. In other respects, M. de Maillebois was a man of common stamp, vain, presumptuous and arrogant. You are aware that his love of idle gossip drove him into exile; nor should I feel much astonished to hear that his passion for babbling had cost him his life.

The Comte de Broglie was a man of very opposite character and abilities. He was first employed as an ambassador from the Court of France to the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland. In this high office he was principally remarkable for the obstinacy of his character, or, to speak more properly, his determined will. Never was there a more accurate judge of mankind than M. de Broglie. His penetrating glance discovered in an instant their qualities or defects, their ignorance or their talents. No less distinguished as a

soldier than a diplomatist, he had served under his brother, the Marshal, and shared his rich harvest of glory. The manner in which he defended Cassel in 1761 completed his reputation; and Louis XV., justly appreciating his deep acquaintance with the legislature of his country, confided to him the direction of the Secret Police. In this office M. de Broglie showed himself the decided adversary and pitiless censor of M. de Choiseul, whose superior interest enabled him to rid himself of so troublesome a foe by procuring his banishment from Court. Then, by a species of unexampled caprice, but which was fully indicative of the weakness of Louis XV., might be seen, at the same time, a man upon whom the heavy displeasure of the monarch had fallen admitted, nevertheless, into a fixed and regular correspondence with the King himself. The exile of M. de Broglie was, in fact, less a fall than a triumph, which was rendered complete when the King, unable to do without him, recalled him and confided to him anew his former functions.

M. de Broglie returned to the Ministry, breathing vengeance against his rival, and determined to leave no measure untried to wrest the post then occupied by M. de Choiseul into his own hands. I must own that his pretensions were well-founded, and the chances in his favour; and if he were not fortunate enough to reach the head of Foreign Affairs, it was to me only that his failure was attributable, and my influence over the mind of Louis alone prevented that monarch from raising him to it.

The Comte de Broglie had too much sense and tact not to cultivate my favour with all possible assiduity; he even rendered me some important services. His active and energetic mind soon discovered and laid before me a crowd of intrigues I should never have heard a word of from M. de Sartines, however well-informed he might himself be on such subjects. The Chancellor both feared and disliked him; nevertheless he wore the fairest face towards him, loaded him with proffers of kindness, and extolled his every word and action from morning till night. He carried the same duplicity into his advice to me, telling me the

most horrible tales of M. de Broglie, at the same time recommending me to affect all possible confidence in him in order to draw him more securely into our interests; and I now bitterly repent the treacherous part I was induced to act in the business. I was born with a frank and ingenuous character, but the air of a Court spoils the best natures. When once we breathe its infected atmosphere, adieu to candour, uprightness, and truth. The poor Comte de Broglie thought himself sure of a firm ally in me, and reckoned not less upon my exertions in his favour than upon his personal interest with Louis XV.; and yet—I confess it with shame—I deceived him in the most unworthy manner. What can I tell you further of this nobleman? His conversation was sparkling and brilliant, yet filled with sarcastic observations. The hatred he bore to the Choiseul family was really amusing, from the ingenuity with which he would assign them their different errors, ridiculous manias, and even crimes—the arrogant Choiseul—the insignificant Praslin—poor Stainville—the unprincipled Grammont; in a word, he had bestowed upon every member of the family an appropriate epithet.

The Chancellor Maupeou, the Ducs d'Aiguillon, de Richelieu, de la Vrillière and de la Vauguyon, the Abbé Terray, and the Comtes de Maillebois and de Broglie were the allies with whose assistance I was about to bring down the already tottering power of the Choiseuls.

The first and, perhaps, most mortal blow was dealt by me when I requested of the King to recall Madame de Grammont.

"In the name of Heaven," exclaimed the King, "what can occasion the singular interest you seem to take in this woman?"

"I have no further reason for it, Sire," replied I, "than that I prefer her being at Versailles than in the provinces. She is traversing the kingdom solely with a view of making fresh enemies for me; and she has done me much more harm during her exile than whilst she was dwelling at Versailles or Paris."

"Still," resumed Louis XV., "it may be easy to send her to some spot where her accursed tongue may no longer exercise itself at your expense. Surely we can find out some secluded village, where, at least, she will find a difficulty in finding many auditors."

"No, Sire," exclaimed I, "I conjure you to recall her; she will be a continual annoyance to me so long as she is at a distance; and, much as I dislike her ugly countenance, I would rather face my enemy than allow her to go on spreading her mischief far and near."

"Well," rejoined the King, "all I can say is that Madame de Pompadour, in your place, would have adopted a very different line of conduct."

"Ah! but then you know I am better than she was; at least, more forgiving—am I not?"

"Indeed," replied Louis XV., "you are; and you well deserve to be rewarded for such genuine goodness of heart. So be content; the Duchess shall be recalled. I am glad of it for her brother's sake; he grieves much over her absence."

"I do not believe," cried I, "that Madame de Choiseul partakes very deeply of his regret."

"No! by my faith, I should think not," exclaimed the King; "she had need to be even more amiable and perfect than you are to love her haughty, imperious sister-in-law. But remember one thing, the return of the Duchess will be a glorious triumph to the party of the Choiseuls. All the worse for you, my sweet Countess, if hereafter you should have reason to repent your kindness; and whose fault will it have been? Not mine, certainly; but your very own, my dear, charitable friend."

Saying these words, the King made me a profound bow of mock respect. I threw my arms about his neck and embraced him; for I well knew that nothing was more welcome and gratifying to him than these unexpected marks of my attachment. He quitted me, all impatience to put an end to the frigid ceremony which had been established between him and his minister since the departure of the Duchesse de Grammont. He reached his own apartments, and instantly

despatched a messenger to desire the Duc de Choiseul to come to him without delay. The moment the minister entered, "My lord," cried Louis XV., "I authorise you to inform your sister that I permit her to return to Versailles. She will no doubt be anxious to resume her plots and underhanded dealings; but, in order to teach her greater generosity of conduct, as well as to wring her with remorse for her past behaviour, I wish you to let her know that she is indebted for her recall to the generous solicitations of the Comtesse du Barri. As far as my feelings were concerned, I can only say I was very far from thinking of terminating her exile."

I am persuaded that the Duke would have preferred that his sister should not have been pardoned, rather than to owe it to my prayers. However, he loaded the King with thanks and acknowledgments, mingled with the handsomest mention of myself. Nor did he stop there; for, some days afterwards, having supped in the small apartments, he seized the moment when I was standing alone by a window to approach me.

"Madam," said he, "after our late conversation, I know not whether to rejoice or not in the favour you are pleased to bestow on your servant. His Majesty has deigned to apprise me of all your goodness in venturing, unsolicited, to intercede for the termination of my sister's exile. This piece of intelligence was most gratifying to me; and it would be even still more so if you would permit me to look upon it as a pledge of your willingness to credit my devotion to your wishes."

"My lord," replied I, "I have not the ill-nature my enemies are pleased to give me credit for. I know how necessary the presence of your sister is to your happiness, and I therefore prayed His Majesty not to deprive you of it any longer."

"And was that your sole motive for so uncommon a proceeding, madam?"

"Yes, my lord, my only one. What other could I have had? your conduct and that of your family has rendered all friendship between us utterly impossible." The Duke made

a movement of surprise. I added, "At least, my lord, you will give me credit for the openness and candour with which I have behaved in the differences between us."

The Duke made no reply; but, bowing haughtily, put an end to a conversation which had already excited the greatest curiosity and speculation, although it had lasted but for a few minutes.

As soon as the Duke had quitted me the King approached. "What has De Choiseul been saying to you?" asked Louis XV. "Was he offering up his thanks? Indeed, he owes you plenty."

"Yes, Sire," replied I, "the Duke proffered his acknowledgments and offers of best services. He imagined, I believe, that his politeness might serve as a foundation for a lasting peace between us."

"And peace, my sweet friend, is a blessing never to be rejected," rejoined Louis XV.

"Never, Your Majesty, when it is offered in sincerity; but when it is merely assumed as a mask to conceal the most hostile intentions, it would be bad policy to accept it."

"You are suspicious and mistrustful, my fair Countess."

"I have good reason for being so," cried I, "and ere long Your Majesty will admit the justness of my conduct."

The Duc d'Aiguillon wished to hear from me the subject of my conversation with M. de Choiseul, and I briefly related to him what had passed between us. The rest of the company, not knowing the particulars of our conference, circulated throughout the Castle the most contradictory reports, some affirming that a perfect reconciliation had taken place, and others declaring that a violent quarrel had ensued between us; and the most amusing part of the affair was that each relator of the story told it with the most circumstantial minuteness of detail.

Meanwhile, the famous memorial of M. de Maupeou—the memorial whose sable fastenings had so alarmed my superstitious fears—had been delivered into the hands of the King. One evening when His Majesty came to pay me his accustomed visit, he appeared sad and dejected, nor

could all my gaiety relax his features from their gloomy expression. At last, losing all patience, I exclaimed:

"Plague take the hateful causes of Your Majesty's bad spirits!"

This burst of petulance drew a smile from the King, who replied:

"It is indeed evident that there exist many who have no greater delight than in disturbing my peace of mind, and I could almost fear that I have no friends left."

"Things have not reached that frightful extremity yet, Sire," answered I, "although it is but too certain that France contains many unprincipled characters, whose sole aim is to drive you to desperate measures."

"I shall never know peace," resumed Louis XV., "so long as these accursed long robes preserve the power invested in them by the weakness, or credulity, of my predecessors. Do you know anything of a memorial the Chancellor left for me?"

"'Tis here, Sire," said I, drawing it from a porcelain vase. "M. de Maupeou gave it me yesterday" (I had, in fact, been its guardian for the last fortnight), "and, as he told me it contained very important facts, I have been attentively perusing it this morning."

"And what do you think of it?"

"I, Sire? I do not presume to understand affairs of State importance. All I can say is, that if the Parliaments appeared to me so dangerous they should not remain four-and-twenty hours in my service."

"Ah, my good Countess, I dare not dismiss them so hastily; they have the whole nation on their side, and their fall would involve me in fearful consequences."

"Yet, Sire," rejoined I, "their existence as a body involves you in dangers equally certain and terrible. Their attack upon M. d'Aiguillon is but the prelude to what they meditate against Your Majesty; and if you would remain in tranquillity, some decided blow must be struck."

"Go on, go on," exclaimed the King, traversing the chamber with hurried steps, "do as others have done:

force me to take some imprudent step which shall draw down upon my head the hatred of all France."

"Sire," I cried, "you mistake. You are the object of universal love — everything proves it; but, unfortunately, you have not made yourself sufficiently an object of dread, and your forbearance and unwearied clemency have given rise to the mistaken idea that you may be disobeyed with impunity. Were you but to burst like the thunderbolt on the Parliament of Paris, the cowardly members of it would be thankful to remove your just resentment by any concessions: your glorious ancestor, Louis XIV., governed them with a whip and a scourge."

"Yes, yes," replied the King, smiling; "he was always ready booted and spurred. But then he was young and victorious, whilst I am old and——"

Louis XV. stopped, and his forehead was darkened with frowns.

"Yes, Sire," I interrupted, "you are old, indeed; and one might even espy your grey locks, were they not concealed by the thick laurels of Fontenoy."

"Ah! but that is long since."

"Not so long but that everyone remembers it as though it had occurred but yesterday," I said.

"You are a sad flatterer," exclaimed the King, while his fine countenance was lighted up with the pleasing recollection of his early prowess; "but," added he, resuming his serious tone, "do you really believe that an act of firmness and determination on my part would succeed?"

"Yes, Sire; I am persuaded of it. You have been the kind, indulgent father long enough; appear as the master, and profound silence will succeed the clamours which have wounded your Royal ear."

"Upon my word," cried the King, rubbing his hands, "I have a great inclination to follow your advice: I do not see what I can do better."

Just at this critical moment fortune brought both the Chancellor and the Duc d'Aiguillon to my apartments.

"Gentlemen," said the King, in answer to their pro-

found salutation, "I have been conferring with my excellent friend here, and she has proposed to me some very decided measures; nothing less than to wage open war with the Parliaments of Paris, and to destroy, by the sole act of my will, the consequences they are pleased to provide for the termination of your affair, M. d'Aiguillon."

"Sire," replied the Duke, "it would indeed be an act worthy of your Royal interference to relieve me from a state of embarrassment which, I may presume your Majesty is now convinced, I should never have been placed in but for my steady observance of your Royal commands."

"Deign, Sire," added M. de Maupeou, "to preserve these praiseworthy intentions. The malice of the Parliaments, unless put a stop to by Your Majesty, is greatly to be feared."

"Well, then," said the King, "if it must be so, summon a general assembly at Versailles for the day after tomorrow."

"And why, may it please Your Majesty, should it be at Versailles?" enquired the Chancellor. "It is, on the one hand, displaying a species of weakness to summon the magistracy to meet you here, while, on the other, it is affording the people a fair opportunity of exclaiming against this violation of their usual forms. Do better than this: leave this place without apprising any person, and appear at Paris whilst you are wholly unexpected. Your unlooked-for presence will strike terror into every heart."

This advice met with my entire approbation, as well as that of the Duc d'Aiguillon. It appeared the only method of avoiding the united resistance of the opposite party; of preventing Paris from being inundated with pamphlets in prose and verse; and of encouraging the timid or emboldening the courageous. The King likewise approved this counsel; and it was therefore agreed that it should be kept secret till the next day only, and that at the breaking-up of the Council the members should be apprised of it.

The following day was Saturday. When the Council had terminated, the King, who had quitted the room hastily, returned. "Gentlemen," said he, "I was about to

leave you, forgetting that I had not announced to you my intentions for the morrow. The Parliament has exhausted my patience; it does not think proper to bring the business relative to the Duc d'Aiguillon to a conclusion; I shall, therefore, take it into my own hands. Early to-morrow I shall present myself in my own person at the Palace, and I flatter myself I shall bring the Parliament to a proper sense of its duty."

At this intimation the Duc de Choiseul became pale as death; he saw in his exclusion from the Privy Council in which these measures had been resolved the rapid diminution of his credit; whilst, at the same time, he feared that if the King thought fit to take him with him to Paris, it would embroil him with the magistracy. Nevertheless, advancing towards the King, and repressing his profound emotion, he said:

"Is my presence necessary to Your Majesty?"

"No, my lord Duke," replied the King; "this is an affair which comes only within the jurisdiction of my Chancellor."

"In that case, Sire, as I had proposed going to-morrow to La Ferté, to pass some days there with M. Delaborde, if you will deign to permit me, I will accomplish this journey."

"Take your pleasure in whatever way seems best to you, my lord," replied the King; "and I wish you all possible enjoyment." Saying which, Louis XV. bowed to M. de Choiseul and quitted the room.

The other members of the Council, to whom all these things were quite new, regarded each other with an enquiring eye. M. d'Aiguillon bore this scrutiny with a calm and steady countenance, and the Chancellor alone could have supposed him better acquainted with what had just transpired than the rest of the assembly.

We learned for a certainty that about eleven o'clock on the same evening a servant of M. de Choiseul was despatched to Paris, bearing to various members of Parliament the confidential intimation of what was to take place on the following day. There evidently existed between this minister and the

magistracy a guilty connivance wholly incompatible with the interests of His Majesty.

The King having returned to my apartments, sent to desire the attendance of the captain of the guards then upon duty. This officer, I think, was M. de Villeroi, but I am not sure of the circumstance, and I cannot now spare time to ascertain the fact. However this may be, the King issued the necessary orders for his regiment to be in readiness to march on the following day: companies were placed along the road and in the squares of Paris, in order that, in case of any disturbance, they might be ready to quell the least appearance of a tumult. When we were alone the King said to me:

"To-morrow will see me, not merely the nominal, but the real master of France; hitherto I have shared my crown with my Parliaments, but it is time I should vindicate my reign alone."

"For Heaven's sake, Sire," cried I, "expose not your sacred person to any danger; think how necessary you are to our safety and happiness."

"Fear not, my dear Countess," replied Louis; "I trust we have no Damiens to dread."

"No, Sire. I fear not your encountering an assassin amongst the long robes; I rather dread the violence of an enraged multitude."

"In that case, madam, I must commit myself to the care of Providence. It would ill become the descendant of Henry IV. to play the coward. I know that my life belongs to the first villain who has sufficient resolution to deprive me of it; but that shall not prevent my going whither honour calls me."

The King had just finished speaking when MM. de Soubise, de Broglie, and d'Aiguillon entered the room.

"Come, gentlemen," said the King, "come and encourage a Frenchwoman, whose fears for my life induce her to dread my endangering it by attending the Parliament to-morrow.

"Sire," replied the Prince de Soubise, "I will answer for your safety with my life."

"And I, Sire," exclaimed the Duc d'Aiguillon, "will forfeit my existence if Your Majesty incurs the least danger."

"There can be no danger for me," said the King, "in the midst of my people; but there is a species of warfare I must prepare myself for: we shall have a shower of pamphlets, songs and epigrams. I shall not be spared any more than you, madam."

"Oh! as for me, Sire, I laugh at such things: I have been too long used to them."

In this and similar conversation we passed the eve of this memorable day.

CHAPTER VI

Note from the King to Madame du Barri—Particulars of the sitting of the Assembly of the 3rd of September, 1770—Madame du Barri writes to the King—Louis XV. pays her a visit—The Chancellor's opinion thereon—Conversation concluded—The Countess grants an audience to one of her old lovers—The manner in which she gets rid of him—The Choiseuls make an unsuccessful attempt to introduce a relation of their own to the King in the hope of her supplanting Madame du Barri.

THE King quitted me early, full of inquietude; for, in resuming the natural bravery of his character, he was yet distressed at thus openly attacking the discontented of his subjects. Nor was I much more tranquil myself; for, brought up, in common with all France, in an hereditary reverence for the Parliaments, I could not look upon the present position of affairs without trembling for the result; and already I saw myself implicated in the consequences, and held up as the object of general animadversion.

With a view to calm my impatience, I had enjoined Comte Jean to despatch couriers to me every quarter of an hour. Nevertheless, I strove with all my powers to maintain the King in his warlike disposition. His Majesty rose rather before his usual time, and sent his head valet to enquire how I had passed the night, as well as to convey to me the following note:

"If you have any influence with Heaven, pray for me. I am about to wage open war with these gentlemen of the long robe; not that the necessary courage is wanting within me, but I tremble at the apprehension that my subjects may not sufficiently comprehend my reasons for this grand stroke. But things cannot remain as they now are. A King who neither advances nor retires is lost. Adieu; I embrace you."

I was deeply touched with this mark of feeling at a moment when matters of overwhelming interest might have been supposed to occupy the King's mind. The whole Court

was in a state of unusual excitement, for the peers, assembled during the night, had not preserved the same silence we had done; and the news of this energetic resolution on the part of Louis XV. was spread throughout Paris and Versailles, and everyone awaited with impatience the result of so important a proceeding.

Monday, the 3rd of September, 1770, at length arrived. At the break of day the various detachments of the King's guards took possession of the posts assigned to them; and their martial and imposing appearance was sufficient to inform every malcontent that they had the power as well as the will to repress all demonstrations of dissatisfaction.

Every member of Parliament, summoned at an early hour of the morning to attend an assembly extraordinary of the States-General, repaired with punctuality to the Palace; a great number of peers likewise attended, and never had a more solemn assembly been collected to discuss the affairs of a nation. After the prescribed ceremony Louis XV., having made the usual salutation to his Parliament by uncovering his head and bowing, contented himself with pronouncing these laconic words:

"Gentlemen, my Chancellor will explain to you my intentions." Upon which M. de Maupeou read aloud the following paper:

"GENTLEMEN,—His Majesty having informed you by a law framed in his presence that it was requisite to the sound exercise of his administration, as well as to the tranquillity of the province of Brittany, that the proceedings instituted against the Duc d'Aiguillon, a nobleman honoured with his confidence and charged with his commissions, should be entirely dropped, had expected that, in dutiful obedience to his wishes, all further prosecution of it would have been avoided.

"Nevertheless, on the 2nd of July last, acting upon an invalid information, you issued a decree, by which, without any previous instruction, any acquired proofs, and to the neglect and contempt of every judicial form and regulation, you attempt to deprive of the prerogatives of his rank a peer

of the realm, whose conduct has been declared irreproachable by your Sovereign himself.

"This decree, which it was signified to you by your Master of the Rolls, at the express desire of His Majesty, had been abrogated by the Royal mandate, was followed on your part by your decrees of the 11th of July and the 1st of August, by which it was manifest that you persisted in your decree of the 2nd of July.

"The King has attentively listened to all your representations, and perfectly recognises the spirit in which they are dictated.

"You have multiplied your acts of disobedience to the will of His Majesty, and your example and principles have given rise to many even more unconstitutional acts in other departments, emanating from the pernicious precedent afforded by you.

"With a view to recall you to the obedience due to your King, His Majesty once more explains his intentions and commands, that all proceedings against the Duc d'Aiguillon shall be consigned to oblivion.

"His Majesty desires not only to destroy every trace of your past conduct, but also to put it out of your power to disobey him for the future.

"The King further commands that all the papers sent to the Parliament of Paris, in consequence of the decrees of the Parliament of Brittany, of the 21st and 28th of March and of the 26th of July last; the minutes and the whole particulars of the decree of the 7th of April, which declares null and void the informations received from Brittany; the protest entered by M. d'Aiguillon; those entered by M. de la Chalotois and one Audonard; the minutes and sum of the information given at Paris; the conclusions of the Attorney-General; the decrees of the 9th and 29th of May, and the 26th and 28th of June; the two decrees of the 2nd of July; the decree of the said day for the notification of the proceedings to M. d'Aiguillon; the decrees of the 11th and 31st of July; the two decrees of the 1st of August, and those of the 3rd, 8th, 9th and 21st of last August, shall be given into his posses-

sion by the Masters of the Rolls and those who are now the depositaries of them."

Here the Chancellor interrupted his discourse by calling, in the name of the King, upon those who had charge of the papers in question to deliver them up. His call was obeyed; and when the whole of the memorials were placed in his hands, he again took His Majesty's orders and thus continued:

"The King commands that the above-mentioned acts and proceedings, arrests and decrees shall be expunged from your registers.

"His Majesty prohibits you from attempting to re-establish in your records, either by copies or notes, should any be in existence, any more than by verbal process, the recollection of the contents of the said acts, writings and proceedings, or by perpetuating their purport in any other manner whatsoever.

"His Majesty commands his First President, as well as every other president or officer, under pain of his severe displeasure, to dissolve every meeting or assembly in which it shall be proposed to re-establish, either wholly or in part, the acts, writings and proceedings now suppressed. You are likewise forbidden, under the same penalty, to be present at any deliberations which may be held in spite of the King's prohibition, or to affix your signature to any *procès verbal* respecting them.

"With regard to your representations, His Majesty has seen with astonishment that you have attempted to establish a resemblance between the events of his reign and those unfortunate occurrences which ought to be effaced from the mind and memory of every true and loyal Frenchman, and in which his Parliament played a too conspicuous part. His Majesty is willing to believe that, in the present instance, you have erred through imprudence only.

"His Majesty persists in his reply respecting his prohibitions to the princes and peers; and, although you are not deemed to be acquainted with what is passing in Brittany, His Majesty deigns to inform you that he will never permit those proceedings to be renewed which he, in his wisdom and

desire for the public good, has thought proper to suppress; that the two magistrates were arrested because their conduct was offensive to His Majesty; and he warns you that those who conduct themselves in a similar manner will receive similar proofs of his resentment.

"His Majesty forbids you, under pain of his heaviest displeasure, from holding any discussion respecting these matters.

"You are most especially prohibited from meddling with matters which do not come within your jurisdiction.

"His Majesty apprises you that he shall look upon any correspondence with the other Parliaments as a criminal confederation against his person and authority.

"His Majesty further enjoins his First President, or any other president or officer who shall preside in his absence, to dissolve every meeting in which any proposition may be made tending to discuss matters respecting which the most perfect silence is commanded, as well as touching any ambassador who may be sent you from the other Parliaments."

The Chancellor here terminated this vigorous protestation, from which we all anticipated the happiest results. In the Beds of Justice none but the Sovereign, or his delegates, had the power of speaking; the Parliament therefore listened in profound silence. However much it might be internally resolving not to obey the King's pleasure, its obedience in effect was merely momentary and apparent, and allowed it time to prepare at leisure the opposition it did not think proper to display till after the recess; and its best policy was to lean entirely to the side of the Chancellor when he expressed his intention of preventing the meeting of the States-General.

Those who had dreaded the fury of the populace were not mistaken. Scarcely were the particulars of this meeting known, than the Court, the city, the whole of France, became in a state of violent excitement, of which an adequate idea can scarcely be formed. A universal clamour arose against the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Chancellor, and even the King, and, as you may readily suppose, I was not spared in the business. I received from different parts of the kingdom more than two hundred anonymous letters, in which I was threatened with

every disgrace, as well as humiliating punishment. The cabal against me was much strengthened by the hatred which this measure excited in the minds of those who had hitherto only regarded me with indifference; and I can truly say that the grief it occasioned me was the greatest I have ever experienced in the whole course of my life.

It was, however, important that I should conceal my uneasiness from the King; and it became no easy task to me to wear the semblance of gaiety and confidence whilst my heart was distracted with all that was going on. I saw the different members of my party the mark of the malignity of public opinion, whilst my enemies were loaded with the most flattering epithets and favours. The conduct of the Duc de Choiseul was universally admired and eulogised, and his not having accompanied the King to the Bed of Justice was praised to the skies, as proving how nobly this nobleman had protested against that disastrous measure: he was everywhere styled the friend and supporter of the laws of the land and the defender and champion of Parliaments.

In my despair at thus seeing the chances turn so entirely in the favour of this minister, I vowed his ruin, and I busied myself in the fulfilment of my oath with a bitter and revengeful feeling of which I could not have believed myself capable. I was still further excited thereto by the return of the Duchesse de Grammont, who was received in triumph at Court, where everyone crowded around her to offer the most joyful welcome, and to assure her she had not been forgotten during her absence. However, her vain boasting, and the parade she made of her haughtiness and hatred to me, contributed not a little to the success of my projects, the particulars of which I shall hereafter relate. I will now resume my account of what passed during and after the holding the Bed of Justice.

Whilst it was being held I continued in the most cruel alarms, although (in compliance with the desire I had expressed) couriers were sent off from Paris to Lucienne, where I had been since the morning, every quarter of an hour, alternately from Comte Jean du Barri, the Prince de Soubise

and the Duc de Fresnay. M. d'Aiguillon and his wife, a lady of great merit, who had just begun to honour me with her friendship, came to mingle their uneasiness with mine. At length a courier came to inform me that the assembly was over, and that the King was on his road homewards. I lost no time in addressing the following words to His Majesty:

"SIRE,—You are now truly the master of these factious men. Heroes have ever sought repose after victory; let me pray of you to take yours with me, and repay me by your presence for the cruel and tormenting anxiety I have undergone during the whole of the day."

This note enchanted him, at least so I heard from the Duc de Tresmes, whom he sent to inform me he should come to dine with me, requesting I would signify to the Duc d'Aiguillon that he would be admitted to the table. Immediately the King appeared, I ran to him, and embraced him with transport.

"Oh, how miserable have you made me," I cried, "ever since you quitted Versailles!"

"Why, you little simpleton," returned he, "did you imagine I ran the slightest danger? Everything has gone on smoothly. I have struck a death-blow to those clamorous gentlemen, and I trust they will now remain tranquil. Besides, it will be folly to attempt any resistance to my wishes, for I am resolved to proceed to the last extremity, and we shall see, in the course of the struggle, which of us shall be conqueror."

These words explained to me how deeply the King was exasperated at the conduct of his Parliament. He was one of those characters easily irritated by resistance, who, reluctant at first to outstep the bounds of moderation, proceed rapidly, when once the Rubicon *is* passed, to deeds of the highest daring.

His Majesty continued: "And all this I shall easily accomplish with a Chancellor possessing the firmness of M. de Maupeou, who cares little for the antiquity of Parliaments, and is still less disposed to respect them."

These sentiments, so favourable to the Chancellor, were

not calculated to give general satisfaction to all who heard them, for there are few at Court who can listen with pleasure to the expression of the Sovereign's open commendation of the conduct of a minister, and they ill brook the concentration of the Royal favour upon one individual. However, upon these occasions the courtiers are careful to conceal their real sentiments, and, according to the established custom of Courts, are unanimous in applauding the King's just discrimination, and with well-feigned admiration echo back their master's words. Louis XV. further added that while the Chancellor was reading his speech to the Parliament he had been much amused by observing the different countenances of the members, the greater part of whom appeared animated by a rage and audacity they took little pains to conceal. "In fact," said he, "a thought then struck me which had not previously occurred to me. I said to myself that mere opportunity alone was wanting to revive the Fronde in France. The germs of revolt are plentifully scattered abroad, and rebels would not be wanting ready to second the treasonable actions of any daring leader."

No person replied to this observation, either to blame or applaud; and the dead silence which ensued produced such an effect on the mind of the King that he remained more convinced than ever of the truth of what he had advanced; and from this moment he received with greater facility the unfavourable impressions we sought from time to time to give him of the Parliaments.

The Chancellor did not join us till a late hour. After the Bed of Justice he was compelled to take the necessary measures for preventing any bad consequences from the stroke of policy which had just been acted. The King received him in the most flattering manner, and repeated in his presence the complimentary things he had said in his absence. "Sire," replied M. de Maupeou, "in accepting the high office and dignity with which Your Majesty has deigned to invest me, I became your servant and not that of the Parliament. So long as it remains faithful to you I will never by any means seek to irritate you against it; but, should it

persist in wandering from the path of its duty, I should advise you to annihilate it altogether, thinking it more desirable to burn (like Hercules) the heads of the hydra at one blow than to wear yourself out in attacking them separately. Nothing is more dangerous than half-resolved measures. A King should be wholly and entirely a King."

These ideas accorded but too well with the sentiments of Louis XV., who bestowed on them his hearty approbation. During the whole of the evening the King continued to dwell upon the necessity of repressing the power of the magistracy, and all present were of the same opinion. Possibly the Duc de Richelieu, had he been there, might have held a different language. He was far from partaking his nephew's hatred to Parliaments. He exclaimed against their proceedings and ridiculed their conduct, but still at heart he believed them necessary—in the first place, to the State; and secondly, to the splendour of the peerage. Parliaments and religion were two themes he studiously avoided discussing. "What would you substitute in their place?" he would enquire of those whose opinions differed from his own; and their vague and unsatisfactory replies only confirmed him in his sentiments. Despite his volatility, this nobleman possessed great solidity of mind. He knew perfectly well what was right, but was too frivolous to be at the trouble of acting up to it; he was a species of reasonable butterfly. There now remains but the shadow of his former self, and I speak of him as though he already reposed beside the celebrated Cardinal, his great uncle.

A few days after this I received an ill-written note, requesting an audience. It was signed "The Marquis d'Aubuisson," of some regiment of musketeers. This name recalled to me, all at once, one of the thoughtless events of my youth. I felt little inclination to renew an acquaintance of which not one pleasing recollection remained, and my first impulse was to return a refusal. However, further reflection determined me to receive this *ci-devant* admirer, who evidently wished to avail himself of my influence in some affair or other. I therefore resolved to defeat his purpose, and to play him a trick he

was far from anticipating. With this view I appointed for the interview he requested the hour at which I was accustomed to receive the thousand and one petitions which were daily addressed to me. This arrangement must have been so much the more mortifying to him as, from the turn and style of his letter, he had presumed to intimate a wish to be received upon a more familiar footing.

I received my numerous applicants in a large saloon, into which they were admitted by turns. I had always one of my sisters-in-law, or some other person, with me; and when the person addressing me desired secrecy, I withdrew into the recess of a large window, where I could converse with my visitor in an undertone, without the slightest chance of being overheard by my companion.

No part of this ceremony was laid aside in favour of my gallant musketeer. Like the others who sought my presence, he was compelled to wait his turn of admission. I recognised him the moment he entered; but being prepared for his appearance, not the slightest sign or indication could be observed in my look or manner of my retaining any past recollections of his person, and, that I might the better command my countenance, I had placed myself so that the light, striking full upon the countenance of the Marquis, left mine in the shadow, and rendered it more difficult to scrutinise my features. He entered with that self-satisfied air that had ever belonged to him, and, full of confidence, approached the place where I sat. The presence of a third person disconcerted him.

"Madam," exclaimed he, "what I shall have the honour to confide to you can be spoken only in your private ear."

"Let us, then, retire to this window, sir. My sister-in-law will have the kindness to withdraw to a little distance."

He knew Mademoiselle du Barri, for they were both from Toulouse, and having most graciously bestowed upon her his best bow, he followed me to the window.

"Madam," said he, "I have long hesitated between the respect which commands me to quit your presence

and the profound passion with which, many years ago, you inspired me—a passion which I had the happiness to believe was reciprocal."

He had now said too much for me to allow of his saying more.

"Sir!" I exclaimed, with the most natural surprise, "do you know where you are, and to whom you speak? If your intellect be deranged, I pity you; but if in the possession of your senses, I must command your silence."

My cool and determined manner seemed to confuse him; but, taking fresh courage:

"How, madam," he cried, "not recollect me! Yet——"

"Sir," I replied, "I repeat I do not comprehend one word of your conversation, and am utterly at a loss to know to what you allude. If you are labouring under any mistake, it is out of my power to clear your bewildered imagination; but I would advise you to retire; and, as my time is precious, I trust you will pardon me if I do not lose it further in idle and unmeaning talk. Your most obedient servant, sir."

At these words I curtseyed to him, and, pulling my bell, gave the signal for the admission of a fresh candidate. The Marquis d'Aubuisson, thunderstruck at his reception, quitted the room without clearly understanding whether I had spoken seriously or in jest. I have since learned that, surprised at a reception so ill agreeing with the favourable opinion he entertained of his amiable self, he maintained a profound silence respecting this interview, and I congratulated myself upon having taken the very best method of freeing myself from his importunities. In my difficult and delicate situation, had I adopted any other means, I might have compromised my safety; for I well knew the presumption of the Marquis, and how capable he was of injuring me by his noisy gasconading, which my brother-in-law had particularly cautioned me to mistrust.

It was about the commencement of this year that the Choiseuls, who had formerly inveighed so bitterly against

the disgraceful situation of being mistress to the King, made a powerful effort to supplant me in the affections of Louis XV. The Comte de Choiseul, son of the Marquis, had espoused a young and beautiful Creole, Mademoiselle de Rubi, whose all-surpassing loveliness was expected to eclipse the whole Court. She was rumoured to be the most perfect beauty that had ever appeared, and her relations built the greatest hopes upon the sensation she would produce. She was duly instructed in the part she should play; and so seductive was her whole appearance, and so impossible did it seem to her partial friends to resist such a blaze of female attractions, that they thought it more than probable that, once seen by the Royal eye, her success with him was certain. I own that I had many serious alarms on the subject myself, when one day the Maréchale de Mirepoix said to me, with her accustomed good humour:

"Well, my fair Countess, so you have a rival in training! The modest and virtuous Choiseuls are dying with envy to step into your shoes. Have a care of them; they are a deep set, who, to win their way to heaven, would give their mothers, sisters or wives for mistresses to the Father, Son or Holy Ghost! I am sadly afraid, not of their succeeding in their plot, but of their filling your mind with alarm."

I replied, with some haughtiness, that I had no fears for myself. But this assertion did not indeed prove the fact, for I found it impossible to rest till I had informed the King of it, who, shrugging up his shoulders, replied, "I know all their schemes, and the hopes formed upon them. But fear not—you run no danger whilst I see Madame de Grammont behind the curtain. Were I to accept a mistress from her hand, she would wish to govern all France; and her insatiable ambition would convert the temple of love into an office for intrigue.

The King kept his word with me. The haughty beauty was brought to Versailles to exhibit her graces and sylph-like form. Louis XV. saluted her with politeness, addressed to her many courteous expressions, but never once looked at her, or seemed aware of her bewitching presence. The eyes

of more than two hundred persons were intently watching the effect she would produce on the King; but he appeared wholly preoccupied and inattentive to all that was going on. This indifference overthrew vast projects, and renewed the fury of the cabal against me. From that moment I was looked upon as the most immoral woman—a highly dangerous one I evidently was, since so fascinating a rival had been unable to supplant me. The conduct of the King upon this occasion perfectly delighted me, proving how entirely I was the sovereign mistress of his heart. I felt assured that I had indeed succeeded the Marchioness de Pompadour; and the King of Prussia, according to his manner of calculating, and his original mode of expression, could not from henceforth refuse to acknowledge me for Petticoat No. 3.

CHAPTER VII

Chagrin of the Duc de Choiseul at the credit and influence of Madame du Barri—The King commissions the Countess to draw out the list of persons who shall attend him to Chantilly—*Pater noster* of the period—The Bishop of Orleans—Grand fête given by M. Bertin—Gallantries of M. de Jarente—The King's opinion of this Bishop—Madame du Barri seeks the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul—Indiscreet behaviour of the latter at the review at Fontainebleau—Adventure of Mademoiselle Béye with three noblemen of the Court—Doctors Senac, Bordeu and Quesnay.

THE Duchesse de Grammont had so well taken her measures that her exile had been generally considered as a mere journey of pleasure and recreation. She returned, notwithstanding, equally incensed against me. Convinced that she had been sacrificed to my superior influence, her desire of vengeance and her bursts of rage contributed not a little to accelerate the downfall of the Duke her brother, and well bore out the Chancellor's assertion that the presence of this lady would only tend to advance our interests; in fact, she only showed herself at Versailles, Compiègne and Fontainebleau to proclaim her grievances, and to enlarge upon the King's folly in elevating me to an eminence from which I employed myself in projecting the degradation and ruin of the high magistracy of France. In this manner she continued sowing the seeds of rebellion in the minds of rich and poor, till she became daily more and more dangerous to the throne.

The Duc de Choiseul, her brother, required no incitement on her part to redouble his hatred against me from the moment that he had seen, by my manner of receiving him when he came to return me his thanks for his sister's recall, that all chance of an accommodation between us was

impossible. He was not ignorant either that I was intently occupied in bringing about his disgrace, and well he perceived that my success was no longer doubtful. You will easily suppose that with these feelings he would not have nominated, of his own accord, the Comte d'Hargicourt second colonel of the Corsican Legion, and that a superior power to his own must have been concerned in effecting this favour. The truth was, the King had positively commanded the presentation of the commission to M. d'Hargicourt; and M. de Choiseul, unable to bear even this annoying proof of my entire influence with His Majesty, presumed to make some observation upon the subject.

"Sir," answered Louis XV., sternly, "I elevate whomsoever I think proper, and render no account to my servants of either my will or my affections."

The sarcastic bitterness of this reply struck the minister speechless. From that moment the King entirely ceased all conversation with him, except during the Council and meetings upon affairs of the State. This was indeed a precursory symptom of his approaching downfall—a fact which was easily read in the diminution of those flattering attentions the Duke and all his family had been accustomed to receive from the Court in general, and principally during the King's journeys upon pleasure or business.

I was less an object of universal homage at Versailles than elsewhere, on account of the Royal Princesses, who held their Court there; but at Compiègne, Fontainebleau, and all the King's residences, whither I went alone, I received the highest honours. My society was sought with the most flattering eagerness, and those who were disagreeable to me remained in the utmost neglect and solitude. It was upon the occasion of one of these excursions that I deeply mortified the Duc de Choiseul. Just before we set out the King said to me:

"Is it not very vexatious to find only weariness and distaste where we had hoped for nothing but pleasure and amusement? Yet this is most commonly the case in all the excursions I take with a view to recreation."

"And do you not know the cause, Sire?" asked I. "It proceeds from the persons by whom you are surrounded. You permit the attendance of those who are not honoured with your friendship and regard, and their presence alone is sufficient to repress the joyous feelings which would prevail were they away."

"I believe you are right," replied Louis XV.; "but when the list is brought me, a thousand considerations of great or secondary importance prevent me from striking out certain names, and nearly always I have reason to be dissatisfied with the manner in which I let the arrangements be made. We are going to Chantilly. Well, I will have nothing to do with the list this time; I leave it to you to make out as you please."

I did not (as you may suppose) refuse so gratifying a mark of confidence, and I profited by it to keep back all those who had afforded me any cause for complaint; nor did I except the Duc de Choiseul. When it was completed I presented it to the King.

"I do not wish to see it," replied he.

"But, Sire, if I have omitted certain names?"

"So much the worse for them," cried he; "they must wait till the next opportunity for repairing the omission."

I clearly perceived that the King comprehended me, and fully understood that the list contained neither the name of his Prime Minister, nor that of the insignificant Duc de Praslin. I leave you to judge the consternation of the Choiseul family, when they received no commands from His Majesty to follow him to Chantilly.

To complete my happiness, the King passed his time very happily; for I exerted myself most indefatigably to prevent his regretting any who were absent, and I can affirm that he never could have found one languid, tedious hour in which to desire their presence. They were not so forgetful of us, however. Furious at my having banished them from participating in the Royal pleasures, they redoubled their invectives and calumnies against me; and this period, in which the quarrels with the Parliaments

were first commenced, was the season in which insults of every species were most unsparingly heaped upon me.

Amongst the many satirical productions levelled at me there was one which was not impregnated with that deadly venom in which the pens of all who wrote at my expense were dipped: it was a parody upon "The Lord's Prayer."[1] Had my enemies contented themselves with this mode of attacking me I could easily have pardoned them; but, unfortunately, hatred knows no moderation, and, in its dread of not reaching the mark, overshoots it. The determined malignity and perseverance of those who sought to injure me, made me resolve no longer to keep terms with them. The most contemptible and inveterate was M. de Jarente, Bishop of Orleans and Minister of Benefices.

He had at first been on my side, imagining, no doubt, that as a bad priest and a rake he would have easily purchased my goodwill, and that I should gladly submit myself to his guidance. I saw him crouching before me at the commencement of my good fortune, and I looked upon his conduct as the more surprising from the fact of his being in the pay of the Choiseuls, whose tool and creature he entirely was.

Notwithstanding the disorders of his ecclesiastical life, M. de Jarente possessed much sense as well as tact. He soon perceived that he could make nothing of me, and immediately, with all the skill of the most experienced general, he made a sudden wheel-about, and returned to the camp of the enemy, which he had only quitted by stealth, and possibly with the consent of the Choiseuls. From that moment he afforded me a thousand causes of complaint; and he was one of those persons whom I was perpetually pointing out to the King as undeserving of his regard.

Whilst these things were going on, the brother of one of our ministers, M. Bertin, treasurer *des parties casuelles*, a man of much wit, and a *bon vivant*, gave, at his country-

1 This parody we abstain from giving, as downright blasphemy.—TRANS.

house at Passy, a most magnificent fête, but as remarkable for the scandal of its proceedings as for its brilliancy. He had assembled all the principal heads of the clergy: M. d'Orleans, the Archbishops of Arles and Toulouse, the Bishops of Montpellier, Coutances, Dijon, Soissons, Chartres, and others, all much fonder of the luxuries of a well-filled dinner-table than of discharging the duties of their vocation. There were likewise present at this entertainment the Duc de la Vrillière, another friend to every species of debauchery; the Abbé Terray, Comptroller-General of the Finances; M. d'Aligre, First President of the Parliament of Paris; the two brothers of the master of the house, the minister and the abbé; some lords of the Court, the Ducs de la Trémouille and de Tresmes, the Prince de Soubise, &c. —in a word, it was a complete assemblage of libertines of the first class.

The amusements of the evening were in harmony with the taste of the guests: exquisite fare, the rarest wines; women whose beauty was equal to the ease with which they threw off the usual forms of modest reserve, were there in profusion. Madame Bertin, with infinite grace, did the honours of her house. Conveniently blind to all that she was not required to see, and equally skilful in the application of her ears, she heard nothing that her guests were desirous should escape her notice, although, in reality, not the slightest word, look or gesture was lost upon her.

The fête was terminated by the representation of *There's Truth in Wine*, a comedy by Collé, written in a very amusing style, but flavoured with a lasciviousness of expression little fitting the chaste ears of the reverend fathers of the Church. Those present, however, did not lose any part of the rich treat; laughed excessively, and retired delighted with all the enjoyments of the evening. The guests might have supposed themselves assisting at the Saturnalia of the middle ages, when they elected a pope from among lunatics and a bishop from idiots.

The ecclesiastic most distinguished by the license of his manners was the Bishop of Orleans, who made his court with a

truly apostolic zeal to a Madame de Blercourt who was present. She was one of those half-virtuous characters who are guided only by what people will say of them, and cast off their lovers as easily as their old gloves. She had first run through her own fortune, then that of many others, and since the attainment of her sixth lustre had directed all her manœuvres against the riches of the clergy. So successful had she been that she had already ruined two bishops, four or five grand vicars, and was now laying siege to the Minister of Church Benefices.

M. de Jarente was certainly not unprovided with female friends; for, besides a fair relation who constantly resided with him, he kept four or five ladies in a sort of secondary capacity; but this seraglio was far from satisfying one of so rapacious an appetite, and he easily fell into the snare laid for him by the crafty Madame de Blercourt. Captivated by her honeyed words and inviting looks, the love-stricken prelate entreated permission to conduct her home; the lady consented, and M. de Jarente did not quit his new acquaintance till an advanced hour on the following day.

I learned all these details almost immediately after the fête. I had entreated M. de Sartines to send his agents to the festive scene, in order that I might furnish myself with a store of anecdotes resulting from the evening's amusement with which to divert the King. I was not a little pleased to hear the account of M. de Jarente's peccadilloes, and lost no time in apprising his Royal master of the fact; for, free as he was in his own notions, he did not like the idea of the clergy disgracing their calling. There was in the heart of Louis XV. a religious feeling, which compelled him to disapprove of such irregularities, and he had for some time past severely reproached himself for allowing the guardianship of Church benefices to be lodged in the hands of so unworthy a prelate.

During my recital the King frequently expressed his displeasure.

"What a distressing thing," said he, "is the conduct of our clergy; their immense riches and unbounded influence

at Court have been their destruction; an entire reform is absolutely requisite, and the State would find such a measure most salutary. As for the Bishop of Orleans, he is a wretch who disgraces the religion he professes; and I should be unable to satisfy my conscience were I to leave him longer in the post he occupies. Let the new year come round, and he shall resign his diocese to worthier hands."

"You should, Sire," I replied, "follow up his dismissal by that of other ministers who serve you even worse than he does. Your Choiseul and your Praslin are insupportable to me, and no longer necessary to you."

"So you think, you little brainless adviser," exclaimed Louis, smiling; "but you are mistaken—more particularly with regard to the former. He is possessed of all the secrets of the State, and to him we are indebted for the family compact which is so greatly to our interest and of which Spain bears the heaviest burden. He is a favourite with all the European Powers—in fact, were I to dismiss him it would be long ere I met with a man of equal talent to set up in his place."

These sentiments from the King's lips displeased me much. It showed me how near his heart De Choiseul still held a place, and how much diligence and perseverance would be required ere his downfall could be effected. On the other hand, I feared to reveal my schemes too plainly by pointing out the Duc d'Aiguillon as a man equally capable, in my opinion, of holding the helm of affairs. I therefore contented myself with shrugging up my shoulders and exclaiming in a piteous tone:

"Lord deliver us from De Choiseul and De Praslin!"

"Enough, enough!" cried the King, impatiently. "This is ill-timed. I am glad to oblige you in everything reasonable, but I cannot do so at the expense of my kingdom."

"Ah, Sire," said I, "do you not consider that your Chancellor possesses sufficient ability? In my opinion he is both clever and decided in his measures."

"Yes, yes; he is well enough for one of the long robe, but he would make an awkward figure in a full Court suit,

with a sword by his side. As King of France, I love to be surrounded by persons of rank and quality, but I should fall in the estimation of all Europe were I to confide the direction of my affairs to an obscure individual like M. de Maupeou."

"Then, Sire," cried I, "you reverse the proverb; and with you it is the gown which makes the monk."

Our conversation finished here, because visitors were announced, and we neither of us wished to discuss the subject before witnesses. I was not slow in communicating what had passed to the Duc d'Aiguillon, who urged me more than ever to combat the influence possessed by the Duc de Choiseul over the mind of his Royal master.

A short time after this we set out for Fontainebleau, for the purpose of affording Louis his favourite amusement of hunting there. This noble mansion is, in my opinion, from the beauty of its situation, far superior to Versailles. I foresaw that this journey would, in some measure, decide the fate of the minister, and that it would, besides, be much more easy for me to wage war against him. The thing became so much the more readily accomplished by the Duke's commission of many imprudences, which drew down even the severe animadversion of the King himself.

He did me the favour to commit his first act of folly on my account when the King reviewed the regiment called his own. By virtue of his office, the charge of doing the honours of the day to the monarch devolved on M. de Choiseul. He had most pompously announced his intention of so doing, but then he was under the expectation of the Dauphiness being present at the ceremony. A caprice on the part of this Princess, whose real motives I will presently explain, deranged all his plans, and I was installed in her place at the review, to which I went, having for my ladies of honour the Duchesse de Valentinois Grimaldi and the Marquise de Montmorency. The King's manner towards me decided that of every other person, and I received the usual military honours dictated by gallantry under similar circumstances. M. de Châtelet,

second colonel, conducted himself most handsomely towards me, and left me no reason to feel the slightest dissatisfaction. In the evening he gave a superb supper under an immense tent pitched in the forest, and everything conspired to show that I was sole mistress of the banquet.

What had become of M. de Choiseul all this time? Early apprised that the Dauphiness would not quit her apartment on that day, he could not endure to contribute to my triumph; and, in consequence, sent to inform the King that a violent colic confined him to his house and would prevent his following His Majesty to the review. Louis XV. came to me, saying:

"The Duc de Choiseul will not be at the review; he is seriously indisposed with the colic."

"Yes, Sire," cried I, "he, no doubt, has severe pain, but it is in his heart, and he keeps away to avoid seeing me honourably treated at the review."

"If this be true," answered Louis, thoughtfully, "his conduct is inexcusable."

"Your Majesty may be assured it is as I say," replied I, "and yet you would have me love such a man."

"Love him, no! but endure him."

"Ah, Sire, I have not your patience."

"I ought indeed to possess a tolerably large portion to put up with certain whims and caprices."

Louis XV. stopped himself there. You can scarcely judge, my friend, how fatal this impolitic action proved to the minister. The King was piqued at it, and imagined himself personally aggrieved by the Duke absenting himself from the review and the supper which followed it. This idea gained so much ground in his estimation, that it was henceforward much more easy for me to injure the minister in the mind of the King, and to persuade him to dismiss him, than it had ever been before.

During our stay at Fontainebleau we were much amused at the wrath of the Princesse de Brionne against an opera-dancer named Mademoiselle de Béye, a very pretty creature, fit for the personification of a pagan nymph, if only for the

accuracy with which she fulfilled every particular of mythological gallantry. She held at this moment in her chains three illustrious lovers, whom she effectually blinded by her artful blandishments to a sense of her unfaithful conduct. The Marquis de Liancourt and the Princes de Guémenée and de Lambesc were the knight-errants who offered themselves as sacrifices upon the altar of this craving and perfidious Danaïde. Instead, however, of waging eternal war till one should obtain exclusive right to the fair, they judged it more wisely done to share her smiles between them. This mutual complaisance may appear to you as passing the bounds of probability—but remember the thing happened at Court, and in that artificial region events that common sense would refuse to credit are deemed natural enough.

The Prince de Guémenée, as though he had taken leave of his senses, seemed determined to anticipate the crisis which his tottering fortunes threatened by lavishing every species of luxury and extravagance upon Mademoiselle de Béye, in the hope thereby to surpass his rivals in her estimation. His gifts to her were heaped in a profusion scarcely ever heard of: he once presented her with the entire furniture of a sleeping-room in porcelain—bed, drawers, secretaire, chiffonnier, night-table, chimney ornaments, timepiece, with a crowd of lesser articles, which together amounted to the sum of one hundred thousand crowns. The whole was exhibited as a curiosity at the house of the cabinet-maker who had provided so curious and costly a service. This prodigality at first disgusted the King, but yet it is very possible that to it I was indebted for the famous toilet service of gold which His Majesty bestowed on me from time to time by single pieces.

Less dissipated, and much more amiable, the Prince de Lambesc was a greater favourite with the sprightly dancer; and his natural parsimony suffered not a little from the sums it cost him to make an adequate return for this preference. The Comtesse de Brionne, his mother, perceiving with regret how much the health and morals of her son were affected by such a connection, caused Mademoiselle de Béye to be pro-

hibited from accompanying him to Fontainebleau, hoping, by her absence and the efforts of her friends, to wean her misguided son from so degrading a passion; but the wily actress, feigning to receive with deference the orders of the Princess, waited only till the Court had set out before she was on the road to rejoin her protectors, to whose power and influence she trusted to screen herself from the effects of Madame de Brionne's anger.

Unfortunately for her friends, she arrived under very unfavourable circumstances. She had a privileged lover, a journeyman, and this low affair being discovered, she was disgraced and confined in the hospital.

We were now approaching the close of the year, and about this period died M. Senac, first physician to the King: he was a man of extensive capacity, excellent sense, lively passions, and implacable in his hatred of all those who offended him. His fondness for boasting was very amusing: he did not himself believe in the power of medicine, although he practised it with great success. He was sincerely attached to the King, who had a severe loss in him. He is said to have been a Protestant minister in his youth, and owed his good fortune to the Maréchal de Saxe. He often related to me that, following this warrior one day near the trenches, he was seized with a mortal terror at finding himself within reach of the batteries of the besieged. The Marshal, perceiving his fright, told him that if he would pull up the windows (for the doctor was seated in the carriage) he would be quite safe. Senac, finding this shelter very doubtful, hastily scrambled out of the vehicle and went to conceal himself in a neighbouring ditch till the Marshal had finished reconnoitring.

I should have liked to put Bordeu in his place: he was a person of superior merit, and, moreover, my own physician; but here I experienced a difficulty that was insuperable. Next to Senac was Dr. Quesnay, first physician in ordinary to the King, who used to consult him, and had, from the time of Madame de Pompadour, reposed the utmost confidence in him. Quesnay was at the head of the sect

of Economists, a great friend and partisan of philosophers, cool, calm and reserved. Admitted formerly into the intimacy of Petticoat No. 2, he could not bring himself to profess the same attachment for me. Unable to supersede him by placing Bordeu in the vacant place, I was compelled to rest satisfied with leaving things in the same state in which they were at the death of Senac; and it is a fact that he had no successor till after the death of Quesnay, in 1774. This physician had transferred his affection for Madame de Pompadour to the Duc de Choiseul, and joined the cabals of his party without being excited by any particular hatred towards me. It is true that the public in general regarded me as a *Jesuit and fanatic*, an imputation ridiculous enough, but which had been clothed by my enemies in the garb of probability. Alas! this was not my real fault: my greatest crime in the eyes of the philosophers was that I could not bend in humble submission before their protector and disciple, M. de Choiseul.

CHAPTER VIII

Madame du Barri succeeds in alienating Louis XV. from the Duc de Choiseul—Letter from Madame de Grammont—Louis XV.—The Chancellor and the Countess—Louis XV. and the Abbé de la Ville—The Maréchale de Mirepoix and Madame du Barri.

MATTERS now assumed an air of importance. My struggle with the Choiseuls had become a deadly warfare, which could only be terminated either by their downfall or my dismissal from Court. This latter measure was not very probable: an old man is not easily detached from a woman whom he loves; and each day only added to my ascendency over the mind of the King. It is true that the same force of habit which enchained Louis XV. to me bound him likewise to M. de Choiseul. The idea of change terrified him, and so great was his dread of fresh faces that he would have preferred dying with his old minister to creating a younger one who might witness his end. Happily, the Duke himself brought on the crisis of his fate. His power was cramped on all sides, yet, resolved not to lay it down till the last extremity, he sought to stay his failing credit with the rising influence of the Dauphiness. His enemies were not slow in pointing out to the King his minister's frequent visits and great assiduities to a foreign princess, and enlarged upon the fatal effects this new alliance might produce to the monarchy.

Meanwhile the Chancellor, threatened by the Parliaments, saw only one way of averting the storm which was about to burst on his head. This was to introduce into the Cabinet persons entirely devoted to himself; but to accomplish his purpose it was necessary to exclude the Duc de Choiseul and his party. M. de Maupeou came to me in December, and, after having gently scolded me for what he termed my

carelessness, showed me a letter from the Duchesse de Grammont, which, he said, would wonderfully aid our plans. This letter was written to one of the presidents of the Parliament of Toulouse, M. de ——. I cannot give you his name; for, although I have preserved the original of the letter, I have mislaid the envelope on which the address was written. I here give you a copy of this curious and important production:

"MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT,—I promised to give you the exact details of all that passed in this gay metropolis, and it is with much pleasure I sit down to fulfil my engagement. Things go on much as usual, or, perhaps, I should be speaking more correctly were I to say they are rapidly progressing from bad to worse. We have no longer a King in France; all power is lodged in the hands of one sprung from the most infamous origin, who, in conjunction with others as intriguing as herself, seeks only to ruin the kingdom and to degrade it in the eyes of other nations.

"The noble firmness of the Sovereign Courts is odious to people of this class; thus you may imagine the detestation in which they regard the candid and loyal conduct of the Duke. In the hope of procuring the dismissal of my brother, they have chosen for his successor a wretch loaded with crimes, a coward, an extortioner, a murderer—the Duc d'Aiguillon. As for you gentlemen who now constitute our Parliament, your places will soon be filled by a magistracy drawn from the very dregs of society—a troop of slaves, deaf and blind, except to those who pay them best.

"This is no time for indolent repose; we must at once courageously and unanimously defeat the guilty schemes of our enemies. So long as my brother retains his present post he will support you with his best interest; but should he be dismissed, your business will soon be finished.

"I beg my best remembrances—first, to your excellent lady, and after her, to Madame B. and Madame L., not forgetting the Marquise de Chalret, whose wit is truly Attic; nor the Marquise de P——s, who conceals beneath the graceful exterior of a Languedocian the soul of one of Corneille's Roman matrons. For yourself, rely upon my warmest friendship and endeavours to serve you. My brother is most anxious to know you after the flattering manner in which I have mentioned you to him. When will you gratify us both by visiting Paris?—Ever yours."

Nothing could have arrived more *à propos* for our purpose than this letter. I was still engaged in its perusal when the King was announced. I wished to hurry it back into the hands of M. de Maupeou, but he, more crafty than I, requested that I would keep it.

"It is fitting," he said, "that it should be seen by the right person."

Louis XV., astonished at the strange scene, enquired what it meant.

"A most shameful piece of scandal, Sire," I replied.

"An infamous epistle," added the Chancellor, "which one of my friends managed to abstract from the post-office and forward to me. I brought it to Madame la Comtesse that she might admire the determined malice of our enemies."

"You excite my curiosity," cried Louis XV. "Madam, have the kindness to allow me to see this paper."

"Indeed, Sire!" I exclaimed. "I know not whether I ought to obey Your Majesty, so entirely has the writer of the letter forgotten the respect due to your sacred person."

"Oh," said the King, "do not fear that. I am but too well used to the offence to feel astonishment at its occurrence."

I placed the paper in the hands of Louis XV., whose eye easily recognised the handwriting of Madame de Grammont. "Ah, ah!" cried he, "is it so? Let us see what this restless lady has to say of us all." I watched the countenance of the King as he read, and saw the frown that covered it grow darker and darker; nevertheless he continued to read on without comment till he had reached the end. Then, sitting down and looking full at the Chancellor, he exclaimed:

"Well, M. de Maupeou, and what do you think of this business?"

"I am overwhelmed with consternation, Sire," he replied, "when I think that one of Your Majesty's ministers should be able to conspire thus openly against you."

"Stay!" cried Louis, hastily, "that fact is by no means proved. The Duchesse de Grammont is a mad woman, who involves the safety of her brother. If I only believed him capable of such treachery he should sleep this night in the Bastille, and to-morrow the necessary proceedings should be commenced against him; as for his sister, I will take care of her within four good walls, and avenge myself for her past misconduct by putting it out of her power to injure me further."

"Sire," said I, in my turn, "remember she is a woman. I beseech you to pardon her, and let the weight of your just indignation fall upon her brother."

"Chancellor," cried the King, "this business must not be lightly passed over."

"Nor without due consideration," replied M. de Maupeou. "Your Majesty may look upon this letter as the basis of a secret plot. As for the Duchess, I am of my cousin's opinion: despise her audacious attempts, but spare not her brother; he alone is the guilty as well as dangerous person."

The King made no answer, but rose, and crushing the letter in his hand, threw it from him.

"Would," he exclaimed at last, "that the fiends had those who take such delight in disgusting me with my very existence! Heavens! how justly may I say I despise all men. Nor have I a much better opinion of your sex, Madame la Comtesse, I must warn you."

"Much obliged, Sire," I cried. "Really I was not prepared for such gallantry. It is rather hard that you should quarrel with me because this disagreeable Duchess behaves ill. Upon my word, it is very pleasant!"

"Come, come," said Louis XV., kissing my cheek, "don't you be a naughty child. If I had not you where should I turn for consolation amidst the torments by which I am surrounded? Shall I tell you? In the midst of all these perplexing affairs, there are moments in which I fear I may not be promoting the happiness of my people."

"Your Majesty is greatly mistaken," replied the Chancellor; "the nation in general must esteem themselves most happy under your reign, but it will always happen that ill-disposed persons seek to pervert public opinion and to lead men's minds astray. The Duchess, when travelling, was the faithful and active agent of her brother. The Duke, to secure his stay in the Ministry, will eagerly avail himself of every adventitious aid; within your kingdom he seeks the aid of the Parliaments and philosophers; without, he claims the succour of Germany and Spain. Your Majesty is certainly master of your own will, and it would ill become me to point out the path you should tread; but my duty compels me to say that the Duc de Choiseul is the greatest enemy of the Royal House. Of this he gave me a convincing

proof in the case of your august son, and now if he fancied he should find it more advantageous to have the Dauphin for his master——"

"Chancellor of France," cried Louis, much agitated, "do you know what you are asserting?"

"The truth, Sire," I exclaimed. "The public voice accuses the Duc de Choiseul of the death of your son. They declare——"

"How! you too, madam!" exclaimed the King, looking at me fixedly.

"And why not, Sire? I am merely repeating what is in everyone's mouth."

"I have heard this horrible charge before," added the King. "The Jesuits informed me of it, but I could not give credit to such a monstrosity."

"So much the worse," I replied. "In the world in which we live we should always be on our guard."

"Sire," added the Chancellor, with the most diabolical address, "I am persuaded that M. de Choiseul is the most honourable man in the world, and that he would shudder at the bare idea of any attempt upon the life of Your Majesty; but his relations, friends and creatures believe that, supported by the Dauphiness, he would continue in office under your successor. Who can answer for their honour? Who can assure you that someone among them may not do that for the Duke which he would never venture to attempt himself? This is the personal danger Your Majesty runs so long as M. de Choiseul continues in office. Were he dismissed, the world would soon abandon the disgraced minister, and the Dauphiness be amongst the first to forget him."

The King was pale with agitation, and for some minutes continued traversing the apartment with hasty strides. Then, suddenly stopping, "You are then convinced, M. de Maupeou," he cried, "that the Duke is leagued with the Parliaments to weaken my authority?

"There are palpable proofs to that effect," replied the Chancellor. "Your Majesty may recollect the skilful manner in which, on the 3rd of September last, he avoided attending

you to Parliament. Most assuredly, had he not been the friend of rebels, he would not have shrunk from evincing by his presence how fully he shared your just indignation."

"That is but too true," cried Louis XV., "and I felt much annoyed at the time that he preferred going to amuse himself at the house of M. de Laborde when his duty summoned him to my side."

"Your Majesty cannot fail to perceive how everything condemns him: his personal conduct, equally with that of his sister, proves how little he regards his Royal master's interest, and should your clemency resolve upon sparing him now, you may find your mercy produce fatal effects to yourself."

"His dismissal," resumed the King, "would disorganise all my political measures. Whom could I put in his place? I know no one capable of filling it."

"Your Majesty's wisdom must decide the point," replied the Chancellor. "My duty is to lay before you the true state of things. This I have done, and I know myself well enough not to intrude my counsel further. Nevertheless, I cannot help remarking that in Your Majesty's Court there are many as capable as M. de Choiseul of directing foreign affairs—M. d'Aiguillon, for example."

"Ah!" answered Louis XV., "this is not the moment, when M. d'Aiguillon is smarting from his severe contest with the long robes, to elevate him over the head of my hitherto esteemed minister."

M. de Maupeou and myself perceived that we should best serve our friend's cause by refraining from pressing the matter further, and we therefore changed the conversation. Nevertheless, as what had already passed had taken its full effect upon the King's mind, he suggested an idea which I should never have dreamed of recommending; and that was, to consult the Abbé de la Ville on the subject.

The Abbé de la Ville, head clerk of foreign affairs, was a man who, at the advanced age of fourscore years, preserved all the fire and vivacity of youth; he was acquainted with ministerial affairs even better than M. de Choiseul himself. Having formerly belonged to the Jesuits, to whom he was

entirely devoted, he had appeared to accelerate the period of their destruction; never had he been able to pardon his patron the frightful part he had compelled him to enact in the business. Years had not weakened his ancient rancour, and it might be said that he had clung to life with more than natural pertinacity, as though unwilling to lay it down till he had avenged himself on De Choiseul.

Louis XV. wrote to him, desiring he would avail himself of the first pretext that occurred to request an audience. This note was forwarded by a footman. The good Abbé easily divined that this mystery concealed some great design, and he therefore hastened to solicit an audience, as desired. When introduced into the cabinet of the King, His Majesty enquired at once:

"M. l'Abbé, can I depend upon your discretion?"

"Sire," replied the Abbé, with a blunt frankness, "I am sorry Your Majesty can doubt it."

"Be satisfied, sir," replied the King, "I had no intention to offend you; but I wish to consult you upon a point, the importance of which you will fully appreciate. Answer me without disguise: do you believe that the services of the Duc de Choiseul are useful to my kingdom, and that my interests would suffer were I to dismiss him?"

"Sire," replied M. de la Ville, without hesitation, "I protest to you, as a man of honour, that the presence of the Duc de Choiseul is by no means essential to the Ministry, and that Your Majesty's interests would sustain not the slightest injury by his absence."

After this the Abbé de la Ville entered into particulars unnecessary to repeat here; it is sufficient to say that all he advanced materially aided our wishes. He afterwards reaped the reward of his friendly services, for when the Duc d'Aiguillon had displaced the Duc de Choiseul, he bestowed on M. de la Ville the title of *Director of Foreign Affairs*, an office created for him, and the bishopric *in partibus* of Tricomie. The good Abbé did not, however, long enjoy his honours, but ended his career in 1774.

This conversation had been repeated to me; and, on my

side, I left no means untried of preventing Louis XV. from placing further confidence in his minister; but, feeble and timid, he knew not on what to determine, contenting himself with treating the Duke coolly, and seeking, by continual rebuffs and denials to his slightest request, to compel him to demand that dismissal he had not the courage to give.

Whilst these things were in agitation, Madame de Mirepoix, who had been for some days absent from Versailles, came to call upon me. This lady possessed a considerable share of wit; and, although on the most intimate terms with me, had not altogether broken off with the De Choiseuls, to whom she was further bound on account of the Prince de Beauvau, her brother. It therefore excited in me no surprise when I heard that the De Choiseuls had called on her to ascertain whether it would not be possible, through her mediation, to come to some terms with me.

"And you must not be angry with me," continued she, "for undertaking the negotiation; I well foresaw all the difficulties, and entertained no hopes of its success; but, upon second thoughts, I considered it better I should accept the mission, for, in case of a negative being returned, it will be safe in my keeping and I will not add to the chagrin of a failure the shame of a defeat."

"It is my opinion," I replied, "that all propositions coming from these people should be rejected; they have compelled me to raise between them and myself an immense wall of hatred, not less difficult to surmount than the great wall of China."

"Yet," replied the Maréchale, smiling, "they are disposed to pay any price for so doing."

"I have friends," I said, "from whom I can never separate myself."

"They are willing that your friends shall be theirs likewise," she cried, "for they perceive that M. de Maupeou, the Duc de la Vrillière, and the Abbé Terray are provided for, and that the Duc d'Aiguillon alone remains to be suitably established. M. de Choiseul would be happy to aid him in obtaining the post of Minister of Naval Affairs."

"Well, and the Duchesse de Grammont," I enquired, "would she visit me?"

"Oh, as to that, I know nothing about it, and can venture no opinion; my commission does not extend so far."

"I understand you," I said. "She seeks for peace only as it would enable her the better to carry on her hostilities against me. I am sorry, Madame la Maréchale, that I cannot accept your terms for a reconciliation."

"Remember, I pray of you, that I have been an ambassadress, and nothing more," said Madame de Mirepoix. "Recollect I have spoken to you in the words of others, not my own. I must beg of you to be secret. If you divulge the particulars of this morning's conversation, it is I who will suffer by it. Your friends will be displeased with me for my interference; and I have no inclination to provoke the anger of a party so powerful as yours."

I promised the Maréchale to observe an inviolable secrecy, and so well have I kept my promise, that you are the first person to whom I ever breathed one syllable of the affair. I must own that it struck me as strange that the Duc de Choiseul should abandon his cousin, and consent to take his seat beside the Duc d'Aiguillon, whom he detested. Perhaps he only sought to deceive us all by gaining time till the death of the King. But what avails speculation upon the words and actions of a courtier, whose heart is an abyss too deep for one gleam of light to penetrate.

CHAPTER IX

Baron d'Oigny, Postmaster-general—The King and the Countess read the opened letters—The disgrace of De Choiseul resolved upon—*Lettre de cachet*—Anecdote—Spectre of Philip II., King of Spain—The Duc de Choiseul banished—Visits to Chanteloup—The Princesses—The Dauphin and Dauphiness—Candidates for the Ministry.

THE interference of Madame de Mirepoix, originating as it did in the Duc de Choiseul, let me at once into the secret of his fears and the extent of my own power. The knowledge of the weakness of my adversary redoubled my energy; and from this moment I allowed no day to pass without forwarding the great work till I succeeded in effecting the Duke's ruin and securing my own triumph. The pamphleteers in the pay of my enemies, and those who merely copied these hirelings, assert, that every evening after supper, when Louis was intoxicated with wine and my seductions, I prevailed upon him to sign a *lettre de cachet* against his minister, which he immediately revoked when the break of day had restored to him his senses. This was a malicious falsehood. You shall hear the exact manner in which the *lettres de cachet* were signed.

On the evening of the 23rd of December, His Majesty having engaged to sup with me, I had invited M. de Maupeou, the Duc de la Vrillière and the Prince de Soubise. It appears that the King, previously to coming, had gone to visit the Dauphiness; he had not mentioned whither he was going, so that his attendants believed him to be in my apartments, and directed M. d'Oigny, Postmaster-general, to seek him there. The Baron brought with him a packet of opened letters. When he saw me alone he wished to retire, for the servants, believing him to be one

of the expected guests, had ushered him in. However, I would not permit him to go until the King's arrival; and, half-sportively, half-seriously, I took from him his letters, protesting I would detain them as hostages for his obedience to my desires. At this moment Louis XV. entered the room, and M. d'Oigny, having briefly stated his business, bowed and departed. The Baron was a very excellent man, possessing an extensive and intelligent mind; he wrote very pleasing poetry, and had not his attention been occupied by the post he filled, he might have made a conspicuous figure in literature.

When we were left to ourselves, I said to the King:

"Now, then, for this interesting and amusing budget; for such, I doubt not, it will prove."

"Not so fast, madam, if you please," replied Louis XV. "Perhaps these papers may contain State secrets, unfit for your eye."

"Great secrets they must be," said I, laughing; "confided thus to the carelessness of the post."

So saying, I broke the seal of the envelope so hastily that the greater part of the letters and notes were scattered over the carpet.

"Well done!" cried the King.

"I entreat Your Majesty's pardon," said I; "but I will repair the mischief as far as I can."

I stooped to collect the fallen papers, and the King had the gallantry to assist me. We soon piled the various letters upon a tray and began eagerly to glance over their contents. My good fortune made me select from the mass those epistles addressed to the members of country Parliaments; they were filled with invectives against me, insulting mention of the King and praises of the Duc de Choiseul. I took especial care to read them in a loud and distinct voice.

"This really is not to be endured," cried Louis XV.; "that the mistaken zeal of these long-robed gentlemen should make them thus compliment my minister at my expense."

"So much the worse for you, Sire," I replied; "considering that you continue to prefer your minister to every other consideration."

As I continued searching through the letters I found and read the following sentence:

"Spite of the reports in circulation, I do not believe it possible that M. de Choiseul will be dismissed; he is too necessary to the King, who, without him, would be as incapable as a child of managing his affairs. His Majesty must preserve our friend in office in spite of himself."

When I had finished, the King exclaimed, in an angry tone, "We shall see how far the prophecy of these sapient gentlemen is correct, and whether their 'friend' is so important to me that I dare not dismiss him. Upon my word, my minister has placed himself so advantageously in front of his master as to exclude him entirely from the eyes of his subjects."

Whilst the King was speaking, M. de Maupeou and M. de la Vrillière were announced. The King, still warm, let fall some words expressive of his displeasure at what had happened. The gauntlet was thrown, and so well did we work upon the irritated mind of Louis XV. that it was determined M. de Choiseul should be dismissed the following day, the 24th of December, 1770. Chanteloup was chosen for the place of his retreat, and M. de la Vrillière, by the dictation of the King, wrote the following letter to the Duke:

"COUSIN,—The dissatisfaction caused me by your conduct compels me to request you will confine yourself to your estate at Chanteloup, whither you will remove in four and twenty hours from the date hereof. I should have chosen a more remote spot for your place of exile were it not for the great esteem I entertain for the Duchesse de Choiseul, in whose delicate health I feel much interest. Have a care that you do not, by your own conduct, oblige me to adopt harsher measures; and hereupon I pray God to have you in His keeping.

(Signed) "LOUIS.
(and lower down) "*Philippeaux.*"

When this letter was completed, I said to the King:

"Surely, Sire, you do not mean to forget the Duke's faithful ally, M. de Praslin? It would ill become us to detain him when the head of the family has taken leav of us."

"You are right," replied the King, smiling. "Besides, an old broom taken from a mast-head would be as useful to us as he would."

Then, turning to M. de la Vrillière, the King dictated the following laconic notice:

"COUSIN,—I have no further occasion for your services. I exile you to Praslin, and expect you will repair thither within four and twenty hours after the receipt of this."

"Short and sweet," I cried.

"Now let us drop the subject," said Louis. "Let Madame de Choiseul repose in peace to-night, and to-morrow morning, at eleven o'clock, go yourself, M. de Vrillière, and carry my orders to the Duke, and bring back his staff of office."

"To whom will you give it, Sire?" enquired the Chancellor.

"I have not yet considered the subject," replied the King.

At this instant M. de Soubise was announced. "*Motus!*" exclaimed the King, as M. de Soubise, little suspecting the nature of our conversation, entered the room. I profited by his coming to slip out of the room into my boudoir, from whence I despatched the following note to M. d'Aiguillon:

"MY DEAR DUKE,—*Victoria!* We are conquerors. Master and man quit Paris to-morrow. We shall replace them by our friends; and you best know whether you are amongst the number of them."

When I returned to the drawing-room, the King exclaimed:

"Come, madam, you are waited for. The Prince de Soubise has a very curious anecdote to relate of an adventure which befell a lady of his acquaintance. I begged of him to defer telling it till you rejoined us."

"Are you afraid of ghosts?" enquired the Marshal of me.

"Not this evening," I replied. "To-morrow, perhaps, or the next day, I may be."

This jest amused the King and the Duc de la Vrillière, whilst M. de Maupeou, who seemed to fear lest I should

by any indiscretion reveal our secret, made a signal of impatience, to which I replied by shrugging my shoulders. Poor M. de Soubise, although he did not comprehend my joke, laughed at it as heartily as the rest who saw its application. Oh! you courtier, I thought. We then entreated of him to commence the recital of his tale, which he did in the following words:

"There is in Lower Brittany a family gifted with a most singular endowment. Each member of the family, male or female, is warned exactly one month previous to his or her decease of the precise hour and day on which it will take place. A lady belonging to this peculiar race was visiting me rather more than a month since. We were conversing quietly together, when all at once she uttered a loud cry, rose from her seat, endeavoured to walk across the room, but fell senseless upon the floor. Much grieved and surprised at this scene, I hastily summoned my servants, who bestowed upon the unfortunate lady the utmost attention, but it was long ere she revived. I then tried to persuade her to take some rest. 'No,' she cried, rising and giving orders for her immediate departure, 'I have not sufficient time for rest. Scarcely will the short period between me and eternity allow me to set my affairs in order.' Surprised at this language, I begged of her to explain herself. 'You are aware,' said she, 'of the fatal power possessed by my family; well, at the moment in which I was sitting beside you on this sofa, happening to cast my eyes on the mirror opposite, I saw myself as a corpse wrapped in the habiliments of death, and partly covered with a black and white drapery; beside me was an open coffin. This is sufficient. I have no time to lose. Farewell, my friend, we shall meet no more.' Thunderstruck at these words, I suffered the lady to depart without attempting to combat her opinion. This morning I received intelligence from her son that the prophecy had been fulfilled—she was no more."

When the Marshal had finished, I exclaimed:

"You have told us a sad, dismal tale; I really fear I shall not be able to close my eyes all night for thinking of it."

"We must think of some means of keeping up your spirits," answered Louis. "As for your story, Marshal, it does not surprise me; things equally inexplicable are continually taking place. I read in a letter addressed by Philip V. of Spain to Louis XIV., that the spirit of Philip II., founder of the Escurial, wanders at certain intervals around that building. Philip V. affirms that he himself witnessed the apparition of the spectre of the King."

At this moment supper was announced. "Come, gentlemen," I said, "let us seek to banish these gloomy ideas around our festive board." Upon which the King conducted me to the supper-room, the rest of the company following us. Notwithstanding all my efforts to be gay, and to induce others to be so likewise, the conversation still lingered upon this dismal subject.

"Heaven grant," exclaimed the Chancellor, "that I may not soon have to dread a visit from the ghost of the deceased Parliament; however, if such were the case, it would not prevent my sleeping."

"Oh!" cried the King, "these long-robed gentlemen have often more effectually robbed me of sleep than all the spectres in the world could do: yet one night——"

"Well, Sire," I asked, seeing that Louis was silent; "and what happened to you that night?"

"Nothing that I can repeat," answered Louis XV., glancing around him with a mournful look.

A dead silence followed, which lasted several minutes; and this evening, which was to usher my day of triumph, passed away in the most inconceivable dullness. What most contributed to render me uneasy was the reflection that, at the very moment when we had freed ourselves of our enemies, we were ignorant who would fill their vacant places. This was an error, and a great one. My friends would not listen to the nomination of the Comte de Broglie, the Comte de Maillebois, the Duc de la Vauguyon, any more than either M. de Soubise or M. de Castries. The Abbé Terray, having upon one occasion proposed the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu, he very narrowly escaped having his face scratched by

M. d'Aiguillon, who cared very little for his dear uncle. But I have unintentionally wandered from the thread of my narrative; I will therefore resume it at once.

I had hoped that the King would this night have retired to his own apartment, and that I should have been enabled to hold a secret council with M. de Maupeou and the Ducs de la Vrillière and d'Aiguillon; but no such thing. Imagining, no doubt, that I should be kept awake by my fear of ghosts, His Majesty insisted upon remaining with me, and I was compelled to acquiesce. He passed a very agitated night, much more occupied with the De Choiseuls than me. He could think of nothing, speak of nothing, but the sensation which their disgrace would produce. He seemed to dread his family, the nobility, the nation, Europe, and the whole world. I strove to reassure him, and to inspire him with fresh courage; and, when he quitted me in the morning, I felt convinced that he would not again alter his determination.

As soon as Louis XV. had left me, Comte Jean entered. Although concealed behind the curtain, and apparently not on the best terms with me, my brother-in-law nevertheless directed my actions and gave me most excellent advice. It was not long ere the Duc d'Aiguillon arrived. He had seen M. de Maupeou during the night, and learned from him the exile of the late minister, but beyond that fact he knew nothing. He inquired of me, with much uneasiness, whether anything had been decided in his behalf. I replied that the King was as yet undecided in his choice of ministers, but that, if the Duc d'Aiguillon came into office, he would, in all probability, be nominated to the administration of foreign affairs: the direction of the War Office had been my noble friend's ardent desire.

Whilst we were thus conversing together on the 24th of December, 1770, eleven o'clock struck; and we could, from the windows, perceive M. de la Vrillière taking his way towards that part of the building occupied by M. de Choiseul when at the Castle. The latter was in conversation with M. Conzié, bishop of Arras, when the arrival of the Duc de la Vrillière, bearing the King's commands, was signified

to him. This prelate, not doubting that the mission related to affairs of importance, took his leave. M. de la Vrillière then presented the *lettre de cachet*, accompanying it with some remarks of his own upon the talents of the minister, and his regret at being selected for so unpleasant an office. "A truce to your feigned regrets, my lord Duke," replied the disgraced minister, sarcastically. "I am well assured my dismissal could not have been brought me by hands more ready to discharge the trust than yours." Saying this, M. de Choiseul placed his credentials in the hands of the Duke, and, slightly bowing, turned his back upon him, as though he had forgotten his presence. M. de Choiseul then retired to summon his sister to communicate to her and his wife the misfortune which had befallen him. He then set out for Paris to make the necessary preparations for removing to Chanteloup. There an officer from the King, charged to accompany him to his place of exile, gave him His Majesty's orders that he should see no person and receive no visits.

This order did not proceed from me, but was the work of the Duc de la Vrillière, who sought by this paltry action to avenge himself upon M. de Choiseul for the reception he had given him. It was wholly useless, however; for in the exile of the Duke was seen a thing unheard of, perhaps, before, and in all probability unlikely ever to occur again—the sight of a whole Court espousing the part of an exiled minister and openly censuring the monarch who could thus reward his services. You, no doubt, remember equally well as myself the long file of carriages that for two days blocked up the road to Chanteloup. In vain did Louis XV. express his dissatisfaction; his Court flocked in crowds to visit M. de Choiseul.

On the other hand, the Castle was not in a more tranquil state. At the news of the dismissal and banishment of M. de Choiseul a general hue and cry was raised against me and my friends; one might have supposed, by the clamours it occasioned, that the ex-minister had been the Atlas of the monarchy; and that, deprived of his succour, the State must fall into ruins. The Princesses were loud in their anger,

and accused me publicly of having conspired against virtue itself! The virtue of such a sister and brother! I ask you, my friend, is not the idea truly ludicrous?

The Dauphiness bewailed his fall with many tears; at least, so I was informed by a lady of her suite, Madame de Campan. This lady was a most loquacious person. She frequently visited my sister-in-law, and, thanks to her love of talking, we were always well informed of all that was passing in the household of Marie Antoinette. However, the Dauphin was far from sharing the grief of his illustrious spouse. When informed of the dismissal of the Duke, he cried out, "Well, Madame du Barri has saved me an infinity of trouble—that of getting rid of so dangerous a man, in the event of my ever ascending the throne." The Prince did not usually speak of me in the most flattering terms, but I forgave him on the present occasion, so much was I charmed with his expression relative to the late minister; it afforded me the certainty that I should not have to dread the possibility of his recalling De Choiseul.

Whilst many were bewailing the downfall of the De Choiseuls, others, who had an eye more to self-interest, presented themselves to share in the spoils of his fortune. These were the Princes de Soubise and de Condé, the Duc de la Vauguyon, the Comtes de Broglie, de Maillebois, and de Castries, the Marquis de Monteynard, and many others, equally anxious for a tempting slice of the Ministry, and who would have made but one mouthful of the finest and best.

The Marquise de l'Hôpital came to solicit my interest for the Prince de Soubise, her lover. I replied that His Majesty would rather have the Marshal for his friend than his minister; that, in fact, the different appointments had taken place; and that, if the names of the parties were not immediately divulged, it was to spare the feelings of certain aspirants to the Ministry. Madame de l'Hôpital withdrew, evidently much disconcerted at my reply. Certainly M. de Soubise must have lost his reason when he supposed the successor of M. de Choiseul would be himself, the most insignificant of French Princes: he only could suppose that he was equal to such an elevation.

However this may be, he took upon himself to behave very much like an offended person for some days; but, finding such a line of conduct produced no good, he came round again, and presented himself as usual at my parties, whilst I received him as though nothing had occurred.

I had more difficulty in freeing myself from the importunities of MM. de Broglie and de Maillebois. I had given to each of them a sort of promise; I had allowed them to hope, and yet, when the time came to realise these hopes, I told them that I possessed much less influence than was generally imagined; to which they replied that they knew my power to serve them was much greater than I appeared to believe. After a while I succeeded in deadening the expectations of M. de Broglie; but M. de Maillebois was long before he would abandon his pursuit. When every chance of success had left him, he gave way to so much violence and bitterness against M. d'Aiguillon that the Duke was compelled to punish him for his impudent rage. I will mention the other candidates for the Ministry at another opportunity.

CHAPTER X

The Comte de la Marche and the Comtesse du Barri—The Countess and the Prince de Condé—The Duc de la Vauguyon and the Countess—Provisional minister—Refusal of the Secretaryship of War—Displeasure of the King—The Maréchale de Mirepoix—Unpublished letter from Voltaire to the Comtesse du Barri—Her reply.

THE Comte de la Marche had always evinced the warmest regard for me, and he sought, on the present occasion, to be repaid for his attachment. Both he and the Prince de Condé had their ambitious speculations in the present change of ministers; and both fancied that because their relative the Duke had governed during the King's minority, the right to the several appointments now vacant belonged as a matter of course to their family. The Count had already sent to solicit my interest, through the mediation of Madame de Monaco, mistress to the Prince de Condé, and, as I shrewdly suspect, the occasional *chère amie* of himself. Finding this measure did not produce all the good he expected, he came, without further preface, to speak to me about it himself. Unwilling to come to an open rupture with him, I endeavoured to make him comprehend that the policy of the Sovereign would never permit his placing any of the administrative power in the hands of the Princes of his family; that he had consented, most reluctantly, to investing them with military command, and that it would be fruitless to urge more.

The Comte de la Marche appeared struck by the justness of my arguments. He replied:

"Well, madam, since I cannot be a minister, I must give up even wishing to be one. But, for the love of heaven, entreat of the King to bestow his favours in the shape of a

little pecuniary aid. Things look ill at present—they may take a worse turn; but he may confidently rely on my loyalty and devotion. The supreme courts, driven to the last extremity, will make a stand, and princes and peers will range themselves under the banners. We well know how much this resistance will displease His Majesty. I pledge myself never to forsake your cause, but to defend it with my life; that is, if my present pressing necessity for money be satisfied. How say you, madam? Can you procure it for me?"

"Very probably I may be enabled to assist you," replied I; "but you must first inform me how much will satisfy you."

"Oh!" answered he, carelessly, "something less than the mines of Peru will suffice. I am not extravagant, and merely ask for so much as is absolutely necessary. In the first place, six hundred thousand livres paid down, and, secondly, a yearly payment of two hundred thousand livres more."

This demand did not appear to me unreasonable, and I undertook to arrange the matter to the Prince's satisfaction, well pleased to secure on my own side so illustrious an ally at so cheap a rate. I procured the assent of the King and the Comptroller-General; the six hundred thousand livres were bestowed on the Comte de la Marche in two separate payments, the pension settled on him, and, still further, an annuity of thirty thousand livres was secured to Madame de Monaco; and I must do the Count the justice to say that he remained faithful to our cause amidst every danger and difficulty, braving alike insults, opprobrium, and the torrent of pamphlets and epigrams of which he was the object. In fact, we had good reason for congratulating ourselves upon securing such devotion and zeal at so poor a price.

The Prince de Condé, surrounded by a greater degree of worldly state and consideration, was equally important to us, although in another way. He had in some degree compromised his popularity by attaching himself to me from

the commencement of my Court favour, and the reception he bestowed on me at Chantilly had completed his disgrace in the eyes of the nobility. He visited at my house upon the most friendly footing, and whenever he found me alone he would turn the conversation upon politics, the state of affairs, and the great desire he felt to undertake the direction of them in concert with me. He would add, "You might play the part of Madame de Pompadour, and yet you content yourself with merely attempting to do so; you are satisfied with possessing influence when you might exercise power and command. Your alliance with a Prince of the Blood would render you sole mistress in this kingdom; and should I ever arrive, through your means, to the rank of Prime Minister, it would be my pleasure and pride to submit all things to you, and from this accord would spring an authority which nothing could weaken."

I listened to him in silence, and for once my natural frankness received a check; for I durst not tell him all I knew of the King's sentiments towards him. The fact was that Louis XV. was far from feeling any regard for the Prince de Condé, and, not to mince the matter, had unequivocally expressed his contempt for him. He often said to me, when speaking of him, "He is a conceited fellow, who would fain induce persons to believe him somebody of vast importance." Louis XV. had prejudices from which no power on earth could have weaned him; and the Princes of the house of Condé were amongst his strongest antipathies. He knew a score of scandalous anecdotes relating to them, which he took no small pleasure in repeating.[1]

However, all the arguments of the Prince de Condé were useless, and produced him nothing—or, at least, nothing for himself—although he procured the nomination of another to

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1 It forms no part of our duty to combat the opinion of Madame du Barri relative to the Prince de Condé. We shall therefore content ourselves with remarking that His Serene Highness displayed, during the Revolution, virtues which have acquired for him universal regard and esteem.—Ed.

the Ministry, as you will hear in its proper place. But this was not sufficient to allay the cravings of his ambition; and, in his rage and disappointment, when open war was proclaimed between the King and his Parliament, he ranged himself on the side of the latter. He soon, however, became weary of his new allies; and, once more abandoning himself to the guidance of interest, he rejoined our party. Well did M. de Maupeou know men, when he said they all had their price; and, great as may be the rank and title of princes with plenty of money, they too may be had.

But amongst all the candidates for the Ministry, the one who occasioned me the greatest trouble was the Duc de la Vauguyon, who insisted upon it that he had done much for me, and complained bitterly of his unrequited services, and of my having bestowed my confidence on others. Up to the moment of the disgrace of the De Choiseuls, he had been amongst the most bitter of the malcontents; but no sooner were they banished from Court than M. de la Vauguyon forgot everything, and hastened to me with every mark of the warmest friendship.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I have much to scold you for; but I will forgive you all your past misdeeds if you will perform your promise to me."

"My dear father," I cried (for I used jestingly to style him so, in the same manner as I designated the Bishop of Orleans, *Gros Père*), "are you indeed displeased with me? That is very naughty; for you know I love you with all my heart."

"If it be true that you entertain any regard for me, why have you evinced so little towards me? Am I not of the right material for making ministers? Why then have you never procured my appointment to any of the vacant situations!"

"Stay, stay, my dear father!" cried I; "how you run on! To hear you talk, any person would suppose that places and appointments rained down upon me, and that I had only to say to you, My dear Duke, choose which you please; then, indeed, you might complain with justice. But you know very

well that all these delightful things are in the hands of the King, who alone has a right to bestow them as he judges best, whilst I am wholly powerless in the business."

"Say, rather," replied the Duke, quickly, "that you find it suit your present purpose to assume this want of power. We all know that your *veto* is absolute with His Majesty, and it requires nothing more to obtain whatsoever you desire."

The Duc de la Vauguyon was powerful, and represented the whole of a party—that of the religionists, which was still further supported by the *Princesses;* but for this very reason the triumvirate, consisting of MM. d'Aiguillon, de Maupeou, and the Abbé Terray, would not have accepted his services at any price.

The good Duke returned several times to the charge; sometimes endeavouring to move me by gentle entreaties, and at others holding out threats and menaces. Good and bad words flowed from his lips like a mixture of honey and gall; but when he found that both were equally thrown away upon me, he retired deeply offended, and, by the expression of his rage and disappointment, succeeded in incensing both the Dauphin and Dauphiness against me. May heaven preserve you, my friend, from the anger of a bigot!

I think I have detained you long enough with the relation of the intrigues by which I was surrounded upon the dismissal of the De Choiseuls, and I will now return to the morning of the 24th of December. When the exiles were fairly out of Paris, the King found himself not a little embarrassed in the choice of a Prime Minister. Those who would have suited our purposes did not meet with the King's approbation, and he had not yet sufficient courage to venture upon electing one who should be disagreeable to us; he therefore hit upon a curious provisional election: the Abbé Terray, for instance, was placed at the head of the War Department. This measure was excused by the assertion that it would require the head of a financier to look into and settle the accounts, which the late minister had, no

doubt, left in a very confused state. Upon the same principle, M. Bertin was appointed to the direction of foreign affairs, and M. de Boynes was invested solely with the management of naval affairs. This man, who was Councillor of State, and First President of the Parliament of Besançon, knew not a letter of the office thus bestowed upon him, but then he was bound body and soul to the Chancellor, and it was worth something to have a person who, it might be relied on, would offer no opposition to the important reforms which were to be set on foot immediately. We required merely automata, and M. de Boynes answered our purpose perfectly well; for a provisional minister nothing could have been better.

The King had at length (in his own opinion) hit upon a very excellent Minister of War, and the person selected was the Chevalier, afterwards Comte, de Muy, formerly usher to the late Dauphin. He was a man of the old school, possessing many sterling virtues and qualities. We were in the utmost terror when His Majesty communicated to us his election of a Minister of War, and declared his intention of immediately signifying his pleasure to M. de Muy. Such a blow would have overthrown all our projects. Happily chance befriended us; the modern Cato declared that he should esteem himself most honoured to serve his Sovereign by every possible endeavour, but that he could never be induced to enter my service upon any pretext whatever. The strangeness of this refusal puzzled Louis XV. not a little. He said to me, "Can you make out the real motive of this silly conduct? I had a better opinion of the man. I thought him possessed of sense, but I see now that he is only fit for the cowl of a monk; he will never be a minister." The King was mistaken· M. de Muy became one under the auspices of his successor.

Immediately that the Prince de Condé was informed of what had passed, he recommenced his attack, and finding he could not be minister himself, he determined at least to be principally concerned in the appointment of one. He therefore proposed the Marquis de Monteynard, a man of such

negative qualities, that the best that could be said of him was that he was as incapable of a bad as of a good action; and, for want of a better, he was elected. Such were the colleagues given to M. de Maupeou to conduct the war which was about to be declared against the Parliaments. I should tell you, *en passant*, that the discontents of the magistracy had only increased, and that the Parliaments of Paris had even finished by refusing to decide the suits which were referred to them; thus punishing the poor litigants for their quarrel with the minister.

Meanwhile the general interest expressed for the Duc de Choiseul greatly irritated the King.

"Who would have thought," said he to me, "that a disgraced minister could have been so idolised by a whole Court? Would you believe that I receive a hundred petitions a day for leave to visit at Chanteloup? This is something new indeed! I cannot understand it."

"Sire," I replied, "that only proves how much danger you incurred by keeping such a man in your employment."

"Why, yes," answered Louis XV.; "it really seems as though, had he chosen some fine morning to propose my abdicating the throne in favour of the Dauphin, he would only have needed to utter the suggestion to have it carried into execution. Fortunately for me, my grandson is by no means partial to him, and will most certainly never recall him after my death. The Dauphin possesses all the obstinacy of persons of confined understanding; he has but slender judgment, and will see with no eyes but his own."

Louis XV. augured ill of his successor's reign, and imagined that the cabinet of Vienna would direct that of Versailles at pleasure His late Majesty was mistaken; Louis XVI. is endowed with many rare virtues, but they are unfortunately clouded over by his timidity and want of self-confidence.

The open and undisguised censure passed by the whole Court upon the conduct of Louis XV. was not the only thing which annoyed His Majesty, who perpetually tor-

mented himself with conjectures of what the rest of Europe would say and think of his late determinations. "I will engage," he said, "that I am finely pulled to pieces at Potsdam. My dear brother Frederic is about as sweet-tempered as a bear, and I must not dismiss a minister who is displeasing to me without his passing a hundred comments and sarcastic remarks. Still, as he is absolute as the Medes and Persians, surely he can have no objection to us poor monarchs imitating him. However, let him do as he pleases in his own kingdom, and allow me the same privilege in mine. After all, why should I heed his or any other person's opinion Let the whole world applaud or condemn, I shall still act according to my own best judgment."

On my side I was far from feeling quite satisfied with the accounts I continued to receive from Chanteloup; above all, I felt irritated at the parade of attachment made by the Prince de Beauvau for the exiles, and I complained bitterly of it to the Maréchale de Mirepoix. "What can I do to help it?" she said: "my sister-in-law is a simpleton, who, after having ruined her brother, will certainly cause the downfall of her husband. I beseech you, my dear, out of regard for me, to put up with the unthinking conduct of the Prince de Beauvau for a little while: he will soon see his error and amend it." He did indeed return to our party, but his obedience was purchased at a heavy price.

Some days after the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul, I received a letter from M. de Voltaire. This writer, who carped at and attacked all subjects whether sacred or profane, and from whose satires neither great nor small were exempt, had continual need of some powerful friend at Court. When his protector, M. de Choiseul, was dismissed, he saw clearly enough that the only person on whom he could henceforward depend to aid and support him, was she who had been chiefly instrumental in removing his first patron. With these ideas he addressed to me the following letter of condolence or, to speak more correctly, of congratulation. It was as follows:

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—Gossip, with her hundred tongues, has announced to me in my retreat the fall of M. de Choiseul and your triumph. This piece of news has not occasioned me much surprise. I always believed in the potency of beauty to carry all before it; but—shall I confess it?—I scarcely know whether I ought to congratulate myself on the success you have obtained over your enemies. M. de Choiseul was one of my kindest friends, and his all-powerful protection sufficed to sustain me against the malice of my numerous enemies. May a poor humble creature like me flatter himself with the hope of finding in you the same generous support? for when the god Mars is no longer to be found, what can be more natural than to seek the aid of Pallas, the goddess of the fine arts? Will she refuse to protect with her ægis the most humble of her adorers?

"Permit me, madam, to avail myself of this opportunity to lay at your feet the assurance of my most respectful devotion. I dare not give utterance to all my prayers in your behalf, because I am open to a charge of infidelity from some, yet none shall ever detect me unfaithful in my present professions. At my age 'tis time our choice was made and our affections fixed. Be assured, lovely Countess, that I shall ever remain your attached friend, and that no day will pass without my teaching the echoes of the Alps to repeat your much-esteemed name.

"I have the honour to remain, madam, yours," &c., &c.

You may be quite sure, my friend, that I did not allow so singular an epistle to remain long unanswered. I replied to it in the following words:

"SIR,—The perusal of your agreeable letter made me almost grieve for the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul. Be assured that to his own conduct and that of his family may be alone attributed the misfortune you deplore.

"The regrets you so feelingly express for the calamity which has befallen your late protector do honour to your generous heart; but recollect that your old friends were not the only persons who could appreciate and value your fine talents. To be esteemed worthy the honourable appellation of your patron is a glory which the proudest might envy; and although I cannot boast of being a Minerva, who, after all, was possibly no wiser than the rest of us, I shall always feel proud and happy to serve you with my utmost credit and influence.

"I return you my best thanks for the wishes you express, and the attachment you so kindly profess. You honour me too much by repeating my name on the bosom of the Alps. Be assured that I shall not be behindhand in making the saloons of Paris and Versailles resound with yours. Had I leisure for the undertaking, I would go and teach it to the only mountains worthy of re-echoing it—at the foot of Pindus and Parnassus.

"I am, sir, yours," &c., &c.

You perceive, my friend, that I intended this reply should be couched in the wittiest style imaginable, yet, upon reading it over at this lapse of time, it appears to me the silliest thing

ever penned; nevertheless, I flattered myself I had caught the tone and manner in which M. de Voltaire had addressed me. He perceived my intention, and was delighted with the flattering deference it expressed. You know the vanity of men of letters; and M. de Voltaire, as the first writer of the age, possessed, in proportion, the largest share of conceit.

CHAPTER XI

M. d'Aligre—The Parliament mystified—The Prince de Condé and the Chancellor—The Chancellor and Madame du Barri—Madame du Barri and the Prince de Condé—The councillors are visited by two musketeers—The Parliament in exile—Berthier de Sauvigny—New magistrates—Protesting princes and peers—Mesdames de Mirepoix and du Barri.

THE destruction of the Parliaments was a necessary consequence of the exile of the Duc de Choiseul. Their continuance as a body was no longer possible; they had rendered themselves displeasing to the King; and, so long as that of Paris existed, the *entrée* to the Ministry was effectually closed against the Duc d'Aiguillon. Still, it was easier to resolve upon this momentous deed than to strike the fatal blow. The Duc de Choiseul, powerful as he had been, was but one man from amongst them, for the noble Duke de Praslin, his relative, was as nothing in the scale. The Duc de Choiseul, I repeat, was but a single individual, whilst the high magistracy formed an immense body, bound by the closest alliances to the nobility, and to the people by old sympathy. This sympathy arose from the need which the nation and Parliament mutually had of each other to support their privileges against the Royal power. Already at this period were springing up those ideas of independence which, by degrees, paved the way for the American War. Heaven grant that these mistaken notions of freedom may lead to nothing worse!

I have already said that the Parliament of Paris had ceased its functions. It was highly important to the Prince de Condé that they should resume them as soon as possible. Madame de Monaco, his mistress, who was endeavour-

ing to obtain a separation from her husband, now found it impossible to gain that definite verdict which would enable her to give herself wholly up to the Prince without any further qualms of conscience. His Serene Highness came every day to lay his complaints before the Chancellor, and to threaten him with his heaviest wrath if he did not procure the termination of this affair. It did not entirely accord with the views of M. de Maupeou to come to an open rupture with the Prince; yet, on the other hand, he was equally at a loss how to manage matters with the Parliament, who proudly and obstinately persisted in their inaction. He therefore resolved upon adopting the following expedient.

M. d'Aligre, a man still in the prime of life, had been for the last three years First President. You are no stranger to his talents and good sense, both of which bid fair to advance him to the head of the magistracy; but in 1731 that all-devouring love of money, which has since become his leading passion, first manifested itself. This cupidity inspired the Chancellor with the hope of gaining him over to his purpose. He therefore sent the Prince de Condé to him. His Serene Highness did not confine himself to this visit. He went to each of the gentlemen of the Parliament, solicited their good offices, and promised them, in the name of the Chancellor, that if they would resume their duties, the edicts with which they were dissatisfied should be withdrawn. The Parliamentarians, seduced by this assurance, resumed their judicial functions. They began by deciding the suit of Madame de Monaco, and, after a short deliberation, declared her fully and duly separated from her husband, and, consequently, free mistress to live with whomsoever she should think proper.

When the Chancellor had tranquillised the Prince de Condé, he recommenced with more zeal than ever the hostilities for a time suspended; and the magistrates now saw, but somewhat too late, that they had been made the dupes of a private purpose. Their rage kindled at the dis-

covery, and they complained bitterly to His Serene Highness of the imposition practised upon them. The Prince replied that he had been as much deceived in the affair as they had been, and that he would call upon the Chancellor for an explanation.

The Prince de Condé kept his word. He called upon M. de Maupeou and enquired why he had only chosen to serve him by embroiling him with the High Court of Parliament. The Chancellor thought he might turn the whole affair into a joke, and began to laugh heartily at the trick thus played upon that grave and sage body. But he failed in his purpose, for the Prince, looking at him with an air of cool contempt, answered that he saw no joke in the unworthy conduct thus openly confessed; that he considered his behaviour as cowardly and unmanly, and that he would never rest till he had brought him to merited disgrace for such mean, such unprincipled transactions.

The Chancellor was far from expecting so severe a reply. He therefore tried another tack, intimating that he had only acted by the directions of the King; upon which the Prince, losing all self-command, declared that were it not for the high office with which His Majesty had invested him, he would cut off his ears, or break a stick across his shoulders. With these words the Prince retired, leaving the poor Chancellor more dead than alive. When M. de Maupeou had a little recovered from his fright, he ordered his carriage to be prepared as quickly as possible, and repaired to Versailles without loss of time to relate to me what had happened. He arrived full of threats, and breathing vengeance against the Prince de Condé, whom he wished immediately to complain of to His Majesty. I advised him to have a care how he did so, and for his own sake to put up with the affront in silence. "For observe well," said I, "that it is you who are in the wrong. You positively assured His Highness that if the Parliament resumed its functions the offensive edicts should be annulled. Depending upon your promise, the Prince pledged his word to the Parliament for the fulfilment of this treaty, and then,

when an affair which interested him is decided, you refuse to keep your engagement, so that the Parliament is fully justified in believing that you and the Prince de Condé were in league to deceive them. The Prince will convict you of falsehood, and, if even you should be enabled to prevent his doing so, you cannot answer for what doubts, unfavourable to you, might in consequence remain in the mind of the King. Take my advice, and allow me to put an end to this quarrel. I will speak to the Prince, endeavour to calm him, and to induce him to accept your excuses." M. de Maupeou easily comprehended the justness of my reasoning, and, having given me *carte blanche*, took his leave and departed.

I hastened to write a note to the Prince de Condé, requesting him to grant me an immediate audience, that I might have some talk with him upon an affair of the greatest importance. I calculated rightly that, instead of returning any answer, he would instantly repair to my house. We had separated somewhat angrily at our last interview, but I felt quite sure that a little coaxing would soon bring him back to my side. I was not mistaken. The Prince de Condé entered my apartment, handsome and dignified as usual, with all the grace of some fabled hero. "My lord," said I, "I am truly ashamed at the trouble I am occasioning your most Serene Highness. It gratifies and yet distresses me to see how kindly my wishes are anticipated." He replied that he had not been able to deny himself so flattering an opportunity of assuring me in person of his entire and perfect attachment. These compliments over, I returned to the pressing affair of which I had made mention in my note; but scarcely had I begun by pronouncing the name of the Chancellor when he interrupted me by a thousand invectives against my *protégé*, whom he styled the most contemptible of created beings. I allowed him to expend his rage, and, when he appeared to have fully vented it, I endeavoured, in my turn, to make him comprehend that M. de Maupeou had only employed stratagem from his over-eager desire to serve him, and

that, fearing to offend him by not effecting the termination of the suit on which so much depended, he had adopted a line of conduct reprehensible, no doubt, but which His Serene Highness ought not, at any rate, to feel so much offence at.

Upon the present occasion my eloquence was entirely thrown away. The Prince, when once he had mounted his high horse, began to rave about his ideas and other men's ideas of honour, &c., ending always with the same strain: "I must be considered as a rogue, and the gentlemen of the Parliament must despise me; the conduct of the Chancellor is that of a worthless and unprincipled man," &c. I could not do anything with him—neither reason nor flattery could move him; and after we had both discussed and disputed the matter for some time with equal obstinacy, I urged that the Prince should pardon M. de Maupeou, if it were only in compliment to me as his mediator. The Prince, who was not over-stocked with sense, did not perceive that this was the moment, for his own interest, to make a generous sacrifice to me of his petty resentment, and he haughtily replied that, desirous as he was of proving himself my most devoted servant, he could not for any consideration lend himself to sanction a dishonourable act either in himself or another. He even added that he saw no other means of re-establishing himself in public opinion than by openly espousing the Parliamentary side of the question. This threat incensed me beyond all bearing; and I replied to the Prince that I should advise him never to think of such an act, under penalty of His Majesty's heaviest displeasure. He answered that his obedience to the King should be complete in all things which did not interfere with his principles and notions of honour, but that so long as he conceived the latter compromised, he would resist all authority which should prevent his properly vindicating himself. Upon this we separated, mutually dissatisfied.

When next I saw His Majesty I made no secret of what had passed between the Prince and myself; for I thought, with reason, that by being the first to mention the affair

I should lessen the effect of his anger towards the Chancellor. The King, as I had expected, was much displeased at this occurrence. "I can foresee," he cried, "sad consequences from this measure. It will indeed be quite a scene—on one side, myself, quite alone, and, on the other, all the Princes of the Blood. La Fronde! la Fronde! we shall see your horrors again; and it is always the Royal power which is adjudged in the wrong upon these occasions. However, they will find I can support my prerogative; and, if they seek to lead a King of France by the nose, they shall not commence with me, most certainly."

Such was the effect produced by the conduct of M. de Maupeou on the mind of the King. It only served to confirm him in the severity of his resolution against the Parliaments. On the other hand, it excited the Parliamentarians, who considered themselves as most shamefully betrayed, to resist, by every possible means, the attacks of the Court party. Those of Paris were the first to set the example: they again ceased giving judgment in all cases referred to them, and even declared they would delay the meeting of Parliament, with a view to stop the monopoly of corn. They flattered themselves that by these resolutions they should secure the nation, particularly the lower orders, to their side.

Meanwhile M. de Maupeou took the best measures in his power to parry the blow he found it impossible to avert, and decided at once upon procuring the abolition of the old Parliament and the formation of a new one. He laid his plans in secret to induce certain members to separate from their colleagues and to form the nucleus of the new body he was desirous of forming. Upon this occasion he said to me, "I am sure of doing as I please with the clergy; the ecclesiastics are men ambitious of power and place; do but tempt them with those glittering baits, and you may lead them all over the world."

The united body of Parliamentarians forming so strong an opposition, it was thought a better stroke of policy to attack them individually. In consequence, on the night of the 19th or 20th of January, 1771, two musketeers, bearing

orders from the King, repaired to the house of each member of Parliament, whom they roused from their slumbers, by presenting a paper for their signature, in which they pledged their words to resume their suspended functions. Great expectations had been raised as to the effect of the visit of these musketeers at so unusual an hour. It proved successful, however, with only a very few. The greater number obstinately refused to affix their name, whilst those who had been surprised into a consent felt so much shame for their pusillanimity that, on the following day, they revoked it by a solemn act, in which they declared their firm intention of standing by and assisting their colleagues.

We waited at Versailles in no small anxiety as to the success of our grand nocturnal expedition. For my own part, I was sanguine of success; but the King, who understood their Parliamentary obstinacy better than I did, observed to me, "You form a wrong judgment of those gentlemen. I am prepared for their resistance; they are devils incarnate, who will certainly drive me stark mad."

The Chancellor still hoped to form his nucleus of a new Parliament. "Tranquillise yourself, Sire," said he; "provided we can but secure a few out of the body, victory is ours; the others will be stigmatised as rebels, the ancient Parliament will still subsist, and that will suffice to satisfy those who have suits of law still undecided." When we heard of the ill success of the musketeers, "Well, my friend," asked Louis XV. of M. de Maupeou, "what has become of your nucleus? It has melted like a snowball in the sun, and your abbés have taken pattern by the others, and have evinced courage for the first time in their lives, only with a view to annoy me."

M. de Maupeou was at first quite overwhelmed. The unanimity of purpose displayed by the Parliamentarians filled him with consternation; he knew not what to say. However, by degrees, he resumed his accustomed confidence; he represented to the King that it was no longer the time to display patience, and that he must now act

towards his intractable Parliament without further consideration or mercy.

This was precisely the King's own opinion; and, as he was resolved to drive things to their utmost extremity, he was only anxious to commence; he therefore gave the Chancellor *carte blanche*. The latter had previously arranged his whole plan; and, on the following night, every member of Parliament, either sick or well, received orders to quit Paris immediately At the same time it was signified to them that if they persisted in their rebellion such conduct would be punished by confiscation; and they were expressly forbidden to assume, under any pretext whatever, the title of president or member of the Parliament of Paris. The magistrates obeyed without manifesting the slightest alarm, and their ridiculous firmness nearly drove us to despair.

To have thus punished them was achieving much, but not all; their seats were empty, and it was essential to appoint a new magistracy in the room of those members who were exiled. The Chancellor readily effected this with one stroke of his magic wand—the Grand Council became metamorphosed into the Parliament of Paris. To effect this prodigy nothing further had been necessary than a Royal warrant, duly signed and sealed with the State seal. The President of the new Parliament, M. Berthier de Sauvigny, was a person of obscure birth, notwithstanding his pretensious to nobility: he had already spent much time in endeavouring to pass himself off on the world as the near relative of a Toulonese family of the same name as himself. He was a man of confined understanding, who, happily for him, allowed himself to be wholly guided by his wife. He was at first so terrified at the part he was required to play that he threw himself all in tears at the feet of Madame de Sauvigny, conjuring her not to insist upon his accepting this First Presidentship. She succeeded at length in inspiring him, and he became the head of our new Parliament. The evening previous to the installation of our Parliament, M. de Maupeou came to sup with me; the King was likewise of the party.

"To-morrow," said His Majesty, "will be a great day for you, M. de Maupeou.'

"And not less great and important for Your Majesty," replied the Chancellor; "it will regain that crown which the Parliaments sought to hold in their hands as a sort of hostage."

"Do you know," added Louis XV., "I should not be surprised if the good people of Paris treat you and your party to a shower of stones. They are sadly out of humour with you; but I presume you and M. de Sartines have taken every necessary and prudent precaution?"

"I have no fears, Sire," replied M. de Maupeou. "I go surrounded by the sacred majesty of the law."

But notwithstanding this apparent firmness, the Chancellor was by no means at ease. He knew better than any other person how entirely he was the object of general hatred to all Paris, and to what a pitch of public indignation the destruction of the Parliaments had excited the nation; but he knew likewise that a man who has once embarked in an enterprise of this nature incurs greater dangers by receding than by marching boldly forwards. He therefore resolved to act courageously, and himself to escort the new Parliament to the House of Peers. The dense crowd which impeded his progress looked on in gloomy silence, and this sullen manner of expressing discontent and disapprobation had something in it indescribably depressing.

The jurisdiction of Paris was confined within very narrow limits. As for the magistracy which the Chancellor had just created, it must be confessed that it was not calculated to attract a very great share of respect or consideration. Unfortunately, our choice of members lay between men either deficient in talent or virtue, and even then we found much difficulty in completing our sixty councillors.

The Court of Justice still remained deserted: those who had once filled its benches had associated themselves in the fate of the old Parliament. One alone exhibited a greater degree of docility; this was M. Joly de Fleury, a man as destitute of morals as of manners, a frequenter of all places of bad resort, and a notorious gambler. MM. de Labourdonnaie, de Châteaugeron, de la Brive and de Nicolai

succeeded to the places, but not to the esteem with which their predecessors had been favoured. The councillors, amongst whom could be found none of those great names so distinguished for talents and probity which had shed a lustre on the late body, were now composed of men whose services were secured by the salary they received, and whose sole care was how to render their new employment more lucrative. M. de Maupeou was not long ere he discovered the melancholy truth that it is much easier to pull down an edifice than to build it up.

Judges were thus provided, such as they were; but advocates and procurators were still wanting. These gentlemen of the long robe, who most particularly prided themselves upon their honour, closed their offices and chambers. Such disinterested conduct, on the part of the procurators especially, was what we had by no means anticipated; but the resistance offered by the advocates was what chiefly annoyed the Chancellor, who became furious with rage and disappointment. However, once more rallying his powers, he succeeded, by dint of plotting, contriving, promises of money and place, in detaching from the discontented advocates four of their number, amongst whom was the famous Gerbier. After a time others joined the Chancellor, and the courts were once more supplied with the necessary officers.

The blow which had fallen upon the Parliament of Paris was far from intimidating those of the provinces, who seemed to glory in drawing down upon themselves the same Royal vengeance which had banished their colleagues. They were all successively destroyed, and afterwards recomposed after the manner of the Parliament of Paris. All this took place in the course of the year. I speak of it in this place that I may have done with the Parliaments. On New Year's Day the Chancellor had been nominated Chevalier des Ordres du Roi. This mark of favour drew upon him the following epigram:

"Ce noir vizir despote en France,
Qui pour régner met tout en feu,
Méritait un cordon, je pense,
Mais ce n'est pas le cordon bleu."

These witticisms were not the only arms employed against so many innovations. The Prince de Condé, who, like his grandfather, wished to play a distinguished part in the political dissensions, and the Duc de Chartres, who was bent upon acquiring a reputation at any risk, drew after them into the party of the malcontents, the former the Prince de Conti and the Duc de Bourbon, and the latter his father, the Duc d'Orleans. This taking up of the gauntlet inspired nearly a score of peers with fresh courage to present their protests against the late changes. The Duc de Duras was charged to present the protestation to the King. His Majesty took it and tore it into pieces, accompanying the act with a sharp rebuke to the poor Duke who had presented it. The unfortunate nobleman, who was more of a fool than a knave, nearly fainted when he heard these reproaches from his Royal master. However, he had sufficient tact to conceal his terror, and managed things so well that, although a *protesting peer*, he continued to keep on good terms with everyone.

When the Chancellor had completed his Parliament, which is still called after his name, he wished to consecrate its existence by a solemn act of the Royal presence, and in consequence announced a Bed of Justice for the 13th of April ensuing. The Princes of the Blood determined not to be there, and tried to persuade the Comte de la Marche to absent himself likewise, but this Prince, who had vowed fidelity to the King's party, and who had not as yet received more than half the sum promised him, declared that his conscience compelled him to obey His Majesty's commands.

"My dear cousin," said one of the malcontents, "it is an act of baseness."

"Agreed," replied the Comte de la Marche; "but it is one of profit likewise, the fruitful consequences of which you will envy me."

It must be avowed that the King did not greatly admire the office of presiding over his new magistracy. By some unaccountable remorse of conscience he found himself compelled to respect the virtue of that Parliament which his

own will had dissolved. We were talking together of the approaching 13th of April.

"I shall, I fear," said he, "play a silly part to-morrow—one which bids fair to compromise my Royal dignity for being seen amongst such a description of persons."

"Sire," cried I, "is it thus you speak of your Parliament?"

"No, upon my soul," exclaimed Louis XV., "I should have made a better selection. It is the Chancellor's Parliament, if it please you to call things by their right names."

"Nevertheless, he administers justice in your name."

"That is precisely what grieves me. I would much rather he should administer it in his own."

It was in vain I sought to change the King's opinion: he was immovably fixed. On the following day, as he was setting out, he called to the Duc de Duras, "My friend, take care of your pockets! Remember, we are not going to the very safest place."

However this might be, I wished to be of the party. Besides, I was desirous of showing myself upon the present occasion, that I might still more enrage the cabal. The Princesse de Valentinois, Madame de l'Hôpital and the Maréchale de Mirepoix accompanied me.

"What business have we here?" asked the Maréchale of me. "We shall be finely lampooned."

"What does that signify?" I replied. "You have the means of repaying yourself. Be satisfied, I beg of you; the King will reward your devotion to his cause."

In conversation such as this we passed the time till we arrived at the Palace. I own I experienced a slight feeling of dread as we crossed the halls and galleries. However, nothing of a disagreeable nature occurred: a trifling murmur was heard at the sight of me, but nothing more. In fact, I began to think that the French, accustomed to the title of the King's mistress, had no greater dislike to it than to any other—that of lady of honour, for instance.

CHAPTER XII

Royal sessions—The Duc de Nivernois—The portrait of Charles I.—A few remarks upon a letter of Voltaire's—Verses addressed to the Chancellor—Verses against the Chancellor—M. Lebrun—Men of letters—The King and Madame du Barri—The Comte du Barri at Toulouse.

THE people, especially the Parisians, still indulged in the hope of seeing their ancient magistracy recalled: they could not give credit to a stretch of authority unheard of until the present hour; and they even jocularly threatened the new members that the ghosts of the old Parliament would come and pluck them from their seats. It was therefore necessary to prove to those who sighed for the return of the old Parliamentarians that the destruction of their friends was perfect and eternal; and, on the other hand, to bestow upon those who adhered to the Royal party some pledge which should satisfy them that they would never be forgotten or forsaken. These two motives determined the holding of the Bed of Justice. The Chancellor, having taken the King's orders, caused three edicts to be read at the assembly. The first declared the entire and irrevocable dissolution of the Parliament, which henceforward no longer existed; the second announced, in an equally peremptory manner, the abolition of the Court of Aids—a measure which had already been put into execution, but of which, for some reason I cannot recollect, I have until now forgotten to speak; finally, the third edict consummated the metamorphosis of the old Parliament into the new one.

According to established custom, the meeting should have concluded after these decrees had been read; but the King, wishing in some measure to declare his personal approbation of the acts of his minister, pronounced the following

words, which produced a great effect: "You have just heard my intentions; I expect they will be conformed to. I command you to commence your functions on Monday next; my Chancellor will install you. I prohibit all deliberations contrary to my will, and all petitions in favour of my old Parliament, for my mind is fixed. I can never change."

The King bestowed on these last words a degree of energy of which I did not believe him possessed. All who were present trembled in the inmost recesses of their mind. The impression produced by the King's assertion affected me so much that when I saw the Duc de Nivernois at the close of the meeting, knowing him to have been among the *protesting nobles*, I could not refrain from saying to him:

"My lord, I trust you will now withdraw your opposition. You heard the King affirm he should never change his mind."

"Yes, madam," replied the Duke, bowing most gallantly; "but when His Majesty uttered those words he was only looking at you."

Nothing could have been more flatteringly turned than this answer. I know not whether my self-love may blind my judgment, but this seems to me one of the cleverest things ever said by M. de Nivernois, whose reputation for wit and sprightly repartee ranked so high. No person could have been endowed with a finer or more delicate taste than was the Duc de Nivernois, who was certainly one of the most gallant and well-mannered noblemen of the Court of Louis XV. He excelled as a poet, and composed fables remarkable for the pure simplicity of their style. I do not eulogise him thus from my own opinion alone, but rather repeat what I have heard from others whose judgment I highly respect. I would, indeed, excuse myself upon all subjects relative to literature; for I must confess I have never cared to go further into the matter than as it concerned my own amusement. I own this, if to my shame even, and, what is still more unfortunate, I fear I shall live and die in the same way of thinking.

After the King had retired, the Chancellor, to complete

the great work, solemnly installed the court which had just been instituted. It was upon this occasion that the Maréchal de Broglie, having observed to the Chancellor:

"You look quite gay and yet calm, my good friend."

"Just like yourself, Marshal, upon the eve of a battle," replied M. de Maupeou.

And it was, in fact, a positive battle which had just been fought by the Chancellor, and a decided victory he had obtained. I am told that history affords no parallel instance of an individual ranking less than a Sovereign bringing about so prodigious a change. The end corresponded with the beginning, and the Parliaments of France fell rapidly, one after another, in the same manner as the Parliament of Paris had been destroyed.

I again allude to this fact because I wish to expose one of the thousand calumnies which found its way into those "Nouvelles à la Main" in which my history has been most scandalously given. In an edition of the book in question, dated the 25th of March in the same year, is the following paragraph:

"The Empress of Russia has deprived that distinguished amateur, the Comte de Thiers, of his magnificent collection of pictures. M. de Marigny has had the mortification of seeing these splendid works of art pass into the hands of strangers for want of necessary funds to purchase the whole for the King. One only of these paintings has been left in France: it is a full-length portrait of Charles I., King of England, by Vandyck. The Comtesse du Barri, who is ever foremost in displaying her taste for the fine arts, desired it might be purchased for her, and paid 80,000 livres for it. In answer to the censure passed upon her for selecting this painting from so many others more likely to attract her notice, the lady replied that she had purchased it as being a family portrait; and explained that the Du Barri family, by reason of their foreign extraction, claimed kindred with the Stuarts. But this reason is mere flimsy pretence. It is well known amongst the initiated at Court that, at the instigation of the Chancellor, the portrait

in question has been placed by her in her apartment beside that of the King; and whenever His Majesty, resuming his natural kindness of heart, seems weary of anger and is disposed to show clemency, the Countess represents to him the example of the unfortunate monarch, pointing out to him that, had not M. de Maupeou detected the guilty conspiracy of his Parliaments to take away his prerogatives, he too might have met with a similar fate. However absurd such an imputation may seem, it is certain that such allusion never fails to irritate and inflame the monarch, and it was from the contemplation of this picture that there issued forth those thunders which struck the magistracy from one extremity of the kingdom to another."

So much for the falsehood; now for the truth. Comte Jean believed himself, and with truth, descended from an ancient and noble family: his arms were similar to those of the English Barri-Moores, and his ancestors had been allied to the Royal House of Stuart. One morning, early, he entered my apartment. "Sister," said he, "the sale of the pictures belonging to the Comte de Thiers is about to take place. Amongst the valuable gems of art contained in the gallery of that nobleman is a portrait of Charles I., King of England, to whom I have the honour to be related. It would be a gratification for both of us that this fine picture—the performance, as it is, of a great master—should remain in Paris. Louis XV. will notice it as it hangs in your drawing-room, and will give us the opportunity of proving that our house has had to boast of its brilliant alliances as well as his." The whole affair was of little consequence to me, who was only Madame du Barri to suit my own purposes; but to oblige Comte Jean I said, "Buy it by all means, and I will pay for it." He did so, and I paid 80,000 livres to gratify his whim. I had the portrait brought to Versailles and placed in my saloon opposite that of the King. When next Louis XV. paid me a visit he remarked this new acquisition and enquired who it was.

"It is a family portrait," I answered; "that of Charles I.

of England. The Du Barri family claim kinship with the House of Stuart."

"Upon my word," replied the King, "it is a very fine picture and a very noble kinsman. This picture, although beautiful as a rare specimen of its art, is valuable to me for the moral it holds forth. It seems as though, when I look at it, a voice whispers in my ear: 'Behold a Prince whose timidity and want of firmness conducted him to the scaffold. Remember the fate of this illustrious sufferer, and avoid it.'"

I managed to lead the conversation to other subjects, and the matter was not again referred to during the evening.

Upon one other occasion, when I was endeavouring to appease Louis XV. who was deeply incensed against some Parliament—I forget now which—and I was pleading for for their pardon, Louis XV. replied, "Madam, I would yield to your entreaties if Charles I. were not there to oppose my clemency. His likeness speaks volumes. It tells me that unless I employ firmness and decision, like him I may perish by the hands of my subjects." I was unfortunate enough to repeat these words, which were commented upon, magnified and finally turned against myself. It was universally affirmed that I excited the King to act with rigour against the High Courts by threatening him with the fate of Charles I. if he did not treat them with severity. There were too many anxious to discover the least indiscretion in my conduct to omit taking advantage of this imprudence of mine; and thus did my enemies with cruel subtlety attribute to the most atrocious intentions that which had its origin only in a woman's vanity.

At the period in which my enemies were thus drawing down upon me the public odium, M. de Voltaire himself quarrelled with the multitude, who adored him. You know how completely this writer always detested the Jesuits and Parliaments. He was, I think, the only man of the age who hated both these bodies and successively combated each of them. When he saw that the destruction

of the magistracy was at hand he was in ecstasies, and, in the fulness of the joy caused by these gladsome tidings, he could not resist writing to congratulate the Chancellor. This was at the commencement of May, 1771. You will easily believe, my friend, that M. de Maupeou, like the rest of the world, attached too much value to a letter from M. de Voltaire to surrender it to me. Nevertheless I can give you the substance of this epistle.

In it M. de Voltaire spoke of the Parliamentarians as "petits bourgeois fanatiques." He referred with indignation to the horrid sentences they had successively passed against men whom public opinion has since declared innocent—Calas, Lally, Sirvan, De Laborre. Upon the whole, I can assure you that the whole letter was most eloquently written, and altogether the finest thing I know of in M. de Voltaire's writing. M. de Voltaire possessed a strong love of humanity, and his mortal hatred was kindled against those whom he considered to have acted oppressively. You know with how much eagerness and energy he defended Calas. You are likewise aware that at the period of which I am now speaking he undertook the cause of young D'Etallonde, who, in the affair of Abbeville, had been condemned to death.

M. de Voltaire gave Morival an asylum in his own house. Nor was that all; he strongly recommended him to the patronage of his friend, the philosophic King. If your memory does not furnish you with the account, you may consult the correspondence of Voltaire, as you will find it in the edition published at Kehl. You will see that, during four years, M. de Voltaire never once wrote to Frederick II. without speaking to him of "his *protégé* D'Etallonde," "his pupil D'Etallonde," "his friend D'Etallonde." This species of protection, granted from the strong to the weak, appears to me above all praise. Unless I greatly mistake, M. de Voltaire will gain prodigiously in the estimation of the rising generation; by degrees the recollection of his petty and disgraceful jealousies, his mean and contemptible rivalries, will be forgotten. Fréron, Maupertius and La Beaumelle

will sink into oblivion, and M. de Voltaire will be remembered only as the friend of humanity, and not as the persecutor of a few men almost unknown.

A thousand pardons for this digression. My enthusiastic regard for this celebrated man has made me wander far from my narrative, and I therefore hasten to resume it.

The letter addressed by M. de Voltaire to the Chancellor, and which the latter had the weakness to circulate very generally, greatly annoyed and irritated our enemies. Nor were they less provoked at some complimentary lines which reached him about the same period. This latter complimentary address was in verse; it ran as follows:

"Je veux bien croire à ces prodiges
Que la fable vient nous conter,
A ces héros à leurs prestiges,
Qu'on ne cesse de nous citer.
Je veux bien croire à ce fier Diomède,
Qui ravit le Palladium,
Aux généreux travaux de l'amant d'Andromède;
Aux guerriers valeureux qui bloquaient Ilium.
De tels contes pourtant ne sont crus de personne!
Mais que Maupeou, tout seul, du dédale des lois,
Ait pu retirer la couronne;
Qu'il ait seul rapportée au palais de nos rois;
Voilà ce que j'ai vu, voilà ce qui m'étonne.
J'avoue avec l'antiquité,
Que ces héros sont admirables,
Mais, par malheur, c'est la fable;
Et c'est ici la vérité."

M. de Maupeou, charmed with this flattering testimony of his public labours, had no desire to keep it to himself alone, but displayed with delight the original to all who craved a sight of it, and even circulated copies with the utmost profusion. The King read it, and pronounced the verses witty and elegant. However, the lines succeeded better at Court than at the capital, where the following severe parody was not long in making its appearance:

"Je veux bien croire à tous ces crimes
Que la fable vient nous conter,
A ces monstres, à leurs victimes
Qu'on ne cesse de nous vanter.
Je veux bien croire aux fureurs de Médée,
A ses meurtres, à ses poisons,

A l'horrible banquet de Thyeste et d'Atrée;
A la barbare faim des cruels Lestrigons.
De tels contes pourtant ne sont crus de personne!
Mais que Maupeou seul ait renversée nos lois,
Et qu'en usurpant la couronne;
Par ses forfaits il règne au palais de nos rois;
Voilà ce que j'ai vu, voilà ce qui m'étonne.
J'avoue avec l'antiquité,
Que ces monstres sont détestables,
Mais, par bonheur, ce sont des fables;
Et c'est ici la vérité."

You will perceive by these lines, my friend, how entirely the conduct of the Chancellor had drawn down upon him the general detestation. Excepting M. de Voltaire, we had only one able supporter of our cause; and this was a young man of much talent, named M. Lebrun. He was secretary to the Chancellor, and published anonymously many very severe pamphlets, which obtained the most complete success. Every other writer of any repute wrote against our party. All these gentlemen were receiving pensions from the King's privy purse, and yet incessantly employed their pens in decrying him. Louis XV., speaking to me of their conduct, said, "They are a parcel of yelping curs, whose bark not even a bone will stop."

However true this might have been, M. de Voltaire did not confine himself to the letter addressed to the Chancellor: it was followed by one or two pamphlets written in his best style. In them he lauded the present mode of administering justice gratuitously by the suppression of the usual fees, the courts of law thrown open to all persons, and the many benefits resulting from the present judicious amendments and regulations.

It is possible that he might have hoped by writing thus to obtain favour both in the Court and city, but unfortunately he succeeded in neither. That which most deeply wounded him was the profound silence observed by the King with regard to him. The poor old gentleman was dying with envy to visit Paris, but this could not be without previously obtaining the Royal assent; for, although a *lettre de cachet* had never been issued against him, he was compelled to abide in exile at Ferney until the King's prohibition to his visiting

Paris, even for a day, should be taken off. In vain did the Chancellor and myself endeavour to overcome His Majesty's prejudices—all our prayers were useless. To all our arguments Louis XV. continually replied, "He is a meddling, impious wretch. I know him far better than you do. He is very well where he is; so let him be. My poor wife could not endure him, and she was right. His writings are detestable, and, sooner or later, will bring bad consequences upon the crown and nation."

Shall I own to you, my friend, that I have always suspected the Duc de Richelieu of having laboured in an underhand manner to preserve the King in his dislike to M. de Voltaire? The old Marshal cordially hated his ancient friend; and, worse still for M. de Voltaire, he feared him. He dreaded principally his reappearance at Paris, lest he should interfere with the proceedings of the French theatre, where, as he rightly divined, the great talents of M. de Voltaire would give him unbounded influence; and, perhaps with a view to preserve his own, he contrived to keep the poet at Ferney all the while he affected to protect and patronise him at Versailles. I have a thousand proofs by me of the truth of what I advance; and the King told me, upon many occasions, that the Duc de Richelieu had formed a correct opinion of M. de Voltaire, which was as much as to say that he looked upon him as a formidable person.

Whilst I was distinguishing myself at Court by endeavouring to obtain the pardon of Voltaire, my husband, Count Guillaume, was rendering himself famous at Toulouse in a different manner.

Bread was frightfully dear, and the people, pinched with hunger, loudly called upon their rulers to adopt some measures for their relief. They first employed prayers, then menaces, which proving equally fruitless, they flew into open revolt. The principal magistrates paraded the town in full ceremony to re-establish peace and order, but their presence, so far from intimidating the populace, only rendered them more furious, and in the tumult a woman struck one of the magistrates, named D'Esparbés, on the face. The unfor-

tunate creature was seized, conducted to the Town Hall, tried and condemned to death. This intelligence was quickly spread amongst the infuriated people, who protested that they would suffer a thousand deaths rather than permit so barbarous a sentence to be executed. Count Guillaume, informed of all that had taken place, drove to the Town Hall, entered the Conciergerie, snatched from the grasp of the law the miserable victim of the offended magistrates, carried her off in triumph in his own carriage, and, having supplied her with money, caused her to quit Toulouse. The disappointed *capitouls* wished to call my husband to account for thus invading their power; but a little reflection convinced them that I should never suffer them to condemn a man whose name I bore, and so the affair ended. By way of conclusion I will just add, that from that period Comte Guillaume was almost idolised in his native city.

As soon as I heard this account I hastened to communicate it to Comte Jean. "Bravo!" cried he, with an air of jealousy; "I see Guillaume will be the hero of the family, while poor I must be satisfied with being a mere cipher."

CHAPTER XIII

Louis XV. consents to depose M. de Jarente—M. de la Roche Aymon, Grand Almoner—His portrait—The Pope's Nuncio—M. de Roquelaure—The King's opinion of this Bishop—*Le Gros Père* and Madame de Montesson — Intrigues of the nobility — Letter to the Duc d'Orleans—Madame de Genlis—Her visit to Madame du Barri—The Comte de Clermont—The King of Prussia's remark upon this Prince—The Count becomes an Academician—Opinion of Louis XV. thereupon—Letter from Madame de Mirepoix—Disgrace of M. de Beauvau—The Duc d'Aiguillon appointed to the direction of foreign affairs.

THE grand crisis had terminated to my advantage; the Choiseul party was destitute of any leader, and to the late rebellious Parliaments had succeeded a supple and pacific magistracy, so that we could breathe freely, as well as look forward with confidence to the future. Nevertheless, one minister still remained—this was the Bishop of Orleans, a man wholly unworthy of his high office from the scandalous immorality of his life; besides which, he had ever been the chosen friend and firm ally of the Duc de Choiseul, and consequently could not remain in power after his patron's disgrace. However, as he was by no means a favourite with the King, he did not give us much uneasiness, more especially as we knew we could easily get rid of him whenever our interest seemed to require his downfall. I was the first to attack this fiftieth adorer of Mademoiselle Guimard.

"Sire," I said one day to the King, "what are you going to do with M. de Jarente? Would it not be as well to send this worthy pastor back to his flock?"

"True," replied the King; "the absence of the shepherd affords but too many opportunities for the wolf to ravage the fold, whilst he who should be the guardian of its safety occupies himself in very different employments."

"In my opinion," I rejoined, "it would do the worthy prelate no harm to despatch him on a visit to his dear friends at Chanteloup, just to see how they all are."

"With all my heart," answered Louis XV.; "but whom shall we put in his place?"

"The beloved Bishop of Senlis," I cried; "a prelate esteemed by every one: not displeasing to me, and justly honoured with your favour and regard, as well as that of your Royal daughters."

"I am sorry to disappoint your wishes," said the King, "but M. de Senlis is not adapted to be the successor of M. d'Orleans, whom, at your desire, I am willing to remove from his see. As to who shall be invested with the vacant bishopric, it must be a matter for further and mature consideration; for the present, the Grand Almoner shall be temporary Director of Church Benefices."

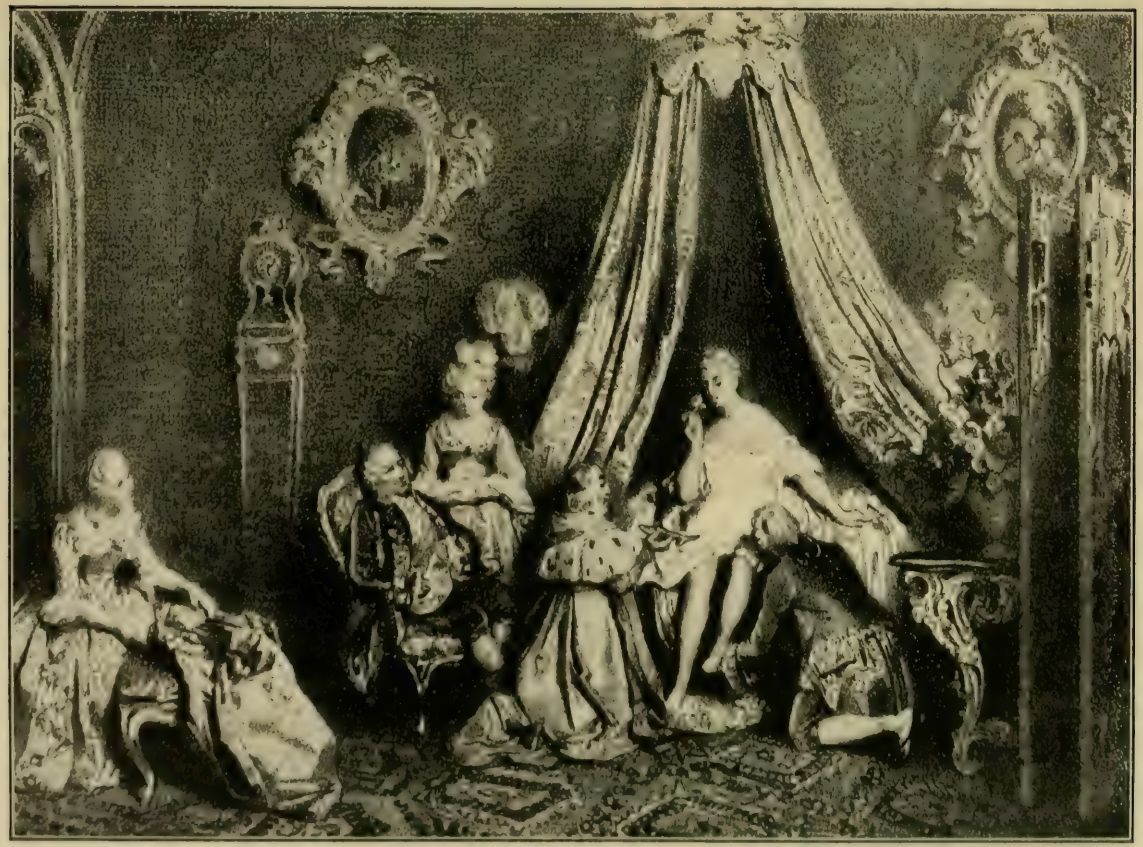
"As you please, Sire," answered I; "the change can scarcely be for the worse."

This Grand Almoner, of whom you once knew something, was the Cardinal de la Roche Aymon, a man of little mind, and wholly devoid of genius, but crafty and servile. Of all the individuals who from humble beginnings have attained riches and eminence, few could boast equal good fortune with M. de la Roche Aymon, who, rather crawling than walking, and bowing even to the ground before all whose necks he was ready to tread on, so that they could serve him as a stepping-stone, had risen to the exalted station he at present occupied. To the many other useful and convenient qualities possessed by this gentleman were those of always agreeing in sentiments with the last speaker, and never meddling with any Court intrigue unless for his own interest. He was a living instance of how little merit has to do with Court favours and success. He affected an extreme *naïveté*, which frequently amused His Majesty, who would laugh at the childish simplicity of his Grand Almoner, while in his heart he entertained an opinion far from flattering of this amusing and condescending person.

M. de la Roche Aymon was not slow in making the most

courteous advances to me. Forgetful of the dignity of his character and office, as well as the doubtful situation in which I stood, he came boldly to pay his attentions at my first arrival at Versailles. I own the sight of one so high and sacredly invested rather staggered me; but quickly discovering how little real worth or piety was concealed beneath his scarlet robe, I was not long in imitating the contempt with which the frogs in the fable regarded their king Log. He came one morning quite early to pay his respects, accompanied by my lord Geraud, Archbishop of Damas and Nuncio to the Pope, as great a flatterer as himself, but possessed of a far more active spirit. The Nuncio, a real Italian, bore on his countenance the stamp of his country: he was a mixture of knavery, cunning, malice, good-nature, and wit; ever on the watch, neither word nor look escaped his scrutiny. A skilful and complaisant flatterer, he affected a simplicity, of which, however, no person was the dupe, although he trusted, by the aid of it, to deceive us all; for ever artificial and studied, he never forgot the diplomatist even amid the relaxations of private life; not one useless word escaped his lips, nor did he suffer the least expression to pass by if it could in any way be converted to his own advantage. This continual tension and straining of the mind rendered him wearying when he might have been agreeable. He possessed many solid qualities, which he employed to the advantage of his compatriots, and by means of which he continued to wage war against our party at Versailles.

Both he and the Grand Almoner never failed to attend my toilette, and it might have caused a smile of surprise and pity to see these two venerable successors of the Apostles performing the duties of lady's maid, and disputing for the honour of presenting me with the different ornaments looked out for my use. They were, besides, cheerful, pleasing companions, and were ever welcome visitors to the gayest saloons. For my own part, I felt at all times pleased to add them to the number of my guests, notwithstanding my earnest desire to place the direction of church benefices in the hands of M. de Roquelaure in preference to them.



M. de Roquelaure was a prelate as amiable as he was clever, who had ever sedulously paid his court to me, but with increased attention since the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul, no doubt in the hope and expectation of sharing in the rich spoils of the late minister; and this I was perfectly well disposed to do, but, unfortunately, through some deeply-rooted prejudice in the King's mind, I was never able to bring my friendly intentions into effect. I never rightly understood the cause of his want of favour in the eyes of Royalty: my own guess is that His Majesty was somewhat dissatisfied at the closeness of the intimacy which subsisted between the Bishop of Senlis and the female branch of his family.

"My dear sir," said I, one day to this prelate, "your inward worth gives you claims to the King's favour, whilst your outward advantages tell to your prejudice. You are handsome; all who see you are willing to confess it, and certain persons who are compelled to acknowledge the fact are by no means disposed to approve of the sentiments with which their fair relatives regard you." I have no doubt that the Bishop perfectly comprehended my meaning, although he feigned astonishment and ignorance of the import of my words, and I could but admire his reserve. There are at Court many things which it is essential we should not only be silent upon, but even affect to be in utter ignorance of; and the crime alleged against M. de Roquelaure was of this description. I would expound this half-explained mystery more clearly did not the respect and esteem I still preserve for the many bounties of the late King place a seal upon my lips.

I have before hinted that the Prince de Beauvau, brother of Madame de Mirepoix, was not in very high favour at Court. He was suspected, and not without reason, of having been one of the principal actors in the conspiracy which induced many of the peers to protest against the suppression of the Parliament of Paris. It was ascertained that the famous circular letter addressed to the nobility had been composed at his house. This production was the sketch of a letter to be written to the Duc d'Orleans, praying him

to set himself at the head of a confederation composed of the nobility and gentry, which was a preparatory step to a revolution. Happily, *le Gros Père* (the Duc d'Orleans) was a pacific Prince, an enemy to noise and intrigue, and altogether incapable of those bold undertakings which secure to the descendants of a successful usurper the legitimate inheritance of a kingdom. His natural disposition was another great obstacle to the accomplishment of those ambitious projects with which the Parliaments would fain have inspired him; and on the other hand, he was under the guidance of Madame de Montesson. This lady, first his avowed mistress, and afterwards his wife by a private marriage, was ambitious of being openly recognised as the lawful wife of a Prince of the Blood. Anxious to save him from all dangerous counsels, she would scarcely permit him to protest against the new magistracy. However all this may be, I give you the two letters, as curious as they are rare; and I am happy at having the power of transcribing them for your perusal:

"*March 27th*, 1771.

"SIR,—I have the honour to forward to you the outline of a letter which, under present circumstances, it would be advisable to address to his Grace the Duc d'Orleans, as the only means remaining to us of carrying our complaints to the foot of the throne, now that we are prohibited from assembling together. I have the honour to inform you, further, that similar letters to this have been forwarded to all the marshals of France who are not peers, the Marquis de Payanne, the Duc de Gontault, the Marquis de Ségur, the Prince de Beauvau, the Marquis de Castri, the Comte de Jarnac, the Duc de Liancourt, Messieurs de Loigny, as well as a great number of gentlemen, that you may have an opportunity of composing the requisite paper in concert with them, for it must be obvious that we have no time to lose.

"I must entreat your pardon, sir, for sending you a letter without a signature; but the motive of this step must be a convincing proof that I am worthy of being a member of that body, whose rights I have so much at heart.

"I am far from supposing, sir, that the style of the letter I have the honour to propose to you is the very best that can be adopted; and I am satisfied that whatever changes you may think it advisable to make in it will be for the advantage of the step I have the honour to suggest to you.

"I am, sir, yours," &c.

[*Copy of a letter to be written to the Duc d'Orleans.*]

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HIGHNESS,—The nobility of this kingdom, who have long sighed under the misfortune of having neither

representative nor leader, as well as at the prohibition which forbids their holding any meeting, with confidence place their interests in the keeping of Your Serene Highness at a period when the destruction of laws and general usages observed until now excite the liveliest apprehension among all ranks of people. Nor can any really honourable man stand by and tamely see the nation disgraced by measures which are calculated to turn the mild and equable form of our government, which has subsisted so many years with undiminished lustre, into an arbitrary and tyrannical despotism.

"The edict of the month of December last, in first attacking the magistracy, and afterwards abolishing it altogether, sufficiently announces the bad intents and purposes of one person towards the loyal subjects of the best and most indulgent of Sovereigns, as well as the threatening prospect held out that posterity are doomed to exchange their King for a despot, whilst the removal of the old Parliament for that at present substituted is an evil so much the more to be dreaded as the new members avail themselves of the sanction of those laws and forms they employ only to abuse and to conceal their real intents.

"To Your Highness, whose rank and sentiments so justly give you access to the throne, it more immediately belongs to let these humble representations be heard there of an order so distinguished in the State that Henry IV. deigned to style it the chief jewel in his crown. Through your means may our gracious Sovereign be enlightened upon his own best interests, and to you may the nobles of the land return their thanks for having obtained a hearing for that voice which has never been heard but to publish its respect for its King, its attachment to its country, and its gratitude to Your Most Serene Highness.

"I am, with the deepest respect," &c.

By these schemes the opposing party had hoped to throw us into confusion; but no sooner had copies of this letter been forwarded to the Duc d'Orleans than Madame de Montesson despatched to me M. de Rullière, private secretary to the Prince, to assure me that the Duke, his master, would remain perfectly quiet in the affair, and that no endeavours should be wanting on her part to preserve him in his passive intentions. I returned my warmest acknowledgments to Madame de Montesson for her encouraging assurances, and during the evening I took an opportunity to inform the King of the part she had taken in the affair. His Majesty did ample justice to the character and virtues of this lady, whose many excellent qualities he fully appreciated and joined with me in extolling. She still constitutes the happiness and pride of her husband; and her lot must be considered by all as far preferable to that which her so highly-gifted niece, Madame de Genlis, at the present moment enjoys.

However celebrated as a *bel esprit*, Madame de Genlis will never be cited for her amiable qualifications. You are aware by what title she was installed in the Palais Royal, as well as the arbitrary sway she exercised there; but one fact concerning her, I believe, you are as yet ignorant of—namely, that she endeavoured, through my interference, to obtain a situation in the establishment of the Comtesse de Provence. She began by writing me an elegantly-worded letter, in which she solicited permission to call upon me the following morning, having, as she said, a particular favour to crave at my hands. Of Madame de Genlis I knew no more at that time than that she was the relative of Madame de Montesson, of whom, by the way, she affected to be exceedingly fond whenever they met, at the very moment that she was speaking and circulating all the injurious and ill-natured reports possible concerning her. I had heard her giddy and indiscreet conduct frequently commented upon, as well as that love of intrigue which had induced her to change her name two or three times; but, in spite of all these disadvantageous reports, I made no objection to receive her. I felt curious to be enabled to judge of her from my own personal survey; and what Madame de Mirepoix had told me of her contributed not a little to obtain for her a gracious reception.

At the appointed hour she arrived, superbly dressed and decorated, wearing on her head an enormous pyramid of flowers, tinsel, ribands and waving plumes; her dress, of a rich green and silver tissue, was loaded with bows, festoons and garlands, &c. She wore both red and white paint, but so wretchedly put on that never did I see so strange an effect; the character of her countenance was in keeping with the oddness of her costume, and I found her stock of common sense just on a par with the inconsistency of her appearance. She made a prodigious display of erudition; and, as though she were conversing with a downright fool, she possibly enacted to the life the scene of Sganarelle in the *Médecin malgré lui;* not that she was wanting in talent, far from it; she possessed accomplishments of the highest order, but accompanied with so much affectation and pretence, so over-

strained and studied, that her presence and her conversation were equally fatiguing.

Madame de Genlis entertained me with many bitter complaints against her aunt, who, she said, had most cruelly treated her; and yet, by her own confession, Madame de Montesson would have been fully justified had she really conducted herself in the manner her niece asserted. Afterwards came a long list of all the qualifications possessed by the said Madame de Genlis, vast praises upon her skill in touching the harp, her surprising melody of voice, &c., all published and proclaimed by the very modest and diffident niece of Madame de Montesson herself. She next gave me to understand that she would willingly undertake the sole charge and education of the expected Princess, promising to spare the Comtesse de Provence the trouble of either thinking, speaking or acting—in a word, never did anyone set out with so little address and more completely overshoot the mark.

You may easily imagine that I came in for a share of her compliments and advice—for of the latter she was always particularly prodigal; but, little desirous of her friendship, I allowed her to run on as she pleased, listening with the most perfect indifference to the occasional eulogiums which interlarded her discourse, and holding myself in a sort of discretionary reserve. I carefully avoided holding out the least hope of her obtaining the post she so ardently desired. I told her that the King had already made his selection of all the persons necessary to be engaged, and that, if a list had not been published, it was because private reasons forbade a premature declaration of names. My candour was evidently displeasing to her, for when she rose and left me, her chagrin was plainly visible. I afterwards learned that she had propagated the vilest falsehoods concerning me, and expressed her surprise how any person could so far degrade themselves as to visit a woman of my description. I was at first very indignant at this piece of hypocrisy; but, reflecting afterwards how powerless was the voice which had thus insulted me, I allowed it to vent itself in empty air, and after a time ceased to trouble myself with the affair altogether.

From some unaccountable oversight, I forgot, when relating to you the conduct of the different Princes of the Blood, to mention the name of the Comte de Clermont. I can only suppose that I likewise omitted telling you of him because he was suddenly snatched away by death during the height of our political struggle. This Prince, of whom you knew nothing, and whom I saw but very little of myself, died before public attention had been at all directed to him. He had displayed both courage and resolution in war so long as he combated beneath the orders of another, but he exhibited a most lamentable incapacity to take upon himself the command of an army.[1] He took the field against the great Frederick, who beat him as if merely at play. Speaking of him, the King of Prussia observed, "I do not despair of seeing the army of France one day under the guidance of the Archbishop of Paris"—alluding to the abbey of St. Germain des Prés, of which the Comte de Clermont was titular head.

The next act of mistaken ambition on the part of the Count was to aim at the reputation of a man of letters. He became a candidate for the title of Academician, and when he had obtained it, he chose to play the Prince and refused to act upon that principle of equality established among the forty members. He behaved not very generously upon this occasion, and even exhibited a barbarity of treatment unknown in modern days, causing an unfortunate poet who had dared to write a sharp epigram upon him to be beaten to death. The wretched author expired from the consequences of the blows he received from a negro, who was commissioned to lay in wait for him, and who executed his duty but too faithfully.

However, this vengeance did not save His Highness from the ridicule his haughtiness and vanity merited. Louis XV. observed to me one day, when speaking of him, "He has behaved like a simpleton in the affair with the Academy; he should have considered the difference of rank between himself and the Academicians before he was admitted. Once received

1 The Comte de Clermont was disgracefully beaten by the Hanoverians at Crefelt (Prussia) on the 23rd of June, 1758.

amongst the members, it became him to conform to every established rule with the meanest among them; he has not chosen to do so, and has justly incurred the general ridicule. A Prince of the Blood should never meddle with men of letters, who are certain to possess a greater share of literary and worldly knowledge than himself. The part of patron of the fine arts is the only suitable one for Royalty, and the Count should have confined himself to it."

These observations were very correct, and I can never too often repeat that Louis XV. was a man of most correct judgment. He was weak, timid and undecided, and it is to these defects that the whole of his faults are attributable. Even the Maréchale de Mirepoix, who was herself possessed of an excellent understanding, did him this justice. This lady was likewise suffering under a horrible calumny: her enemies went so far as to accuse her of sacrificing her brother to me. This was a gross falsehood, and the letters she wrote to me whilst confined by a sprained ankle to her hotel at Paris are irrefragable proofs of it. The King, at my request, had just secured to her a pension of 100,000 livres, and the following letter was addressed to me a short time afterwards:

"To Madame du Barri,—Well, my dear Countess, I am completely a prisoner—quite lame. I begin to lose all hope, for I have now been confined to my room nearly a fortnight, and yet no signs of amendment. The fact is, I believe, the uneasy state of my mind retards the cure of my sprained foot. My head is crowded with alarming apprehensions for the safety of those most dear to me; nor can I persuade myself that my fears are groundless. I entreat of you, by all your friendship for me, to deal gently with my brother, and to intercede for him with our beloved monarch. You have a judgment too correct and a head too excellent to refuse to acknowledge that there are some situations in which we must enter warmly and readily into the service of those we love if we would not wish to be considered weak, ungrateful, and even false to our friends. These things must be as clear to you as to me; and I beseech you to strain every nerve in my behalf, or, rather, in that of my brother. Spare no prayers or supplications with the King; repeat to him that the Prince de Beauvau loves him, as a loyal and devoted subject should love the best of Sovereigns, and that his respect for his gracious master can only be equalled by his attachment. On the other hand, endeavour to excuse his imprudence by pointing out the lively affection and firm ties which bind him to the exiles. It is at least worth advancing as a palliative.

"Believe me that it will be only by a constant show of gentleness and mildness, as well as a ready pardon and forgetfulness of injuries, that you will induce an envious world to pardon you your present good fortune. Those who cannot judge you from a close survey imagine you to be like the most ridiculous images. Some even form an idea of your person from the description of *la Gargouille de Troyes*, or of *la Tarasque de Tarascon;* even the higher circles cannot agree upon the subject. Set all these contradictory tales at rest, and make those who have propagated them blush for their folly by showing yourself as you really are—as good as beautiful; and let the whole empire acknowledge you worthy of the power you enjoy by the noble use you make of it—that of leading our excellent and revered monarch to show mercy to his erring and repentant subjects.

"The old Marquise du Deffant, whom I have known so long that sometimes I catch myself upon the point of believing her to be as much my friend as she professes to be, and to love her accordingly, is very anxious to hear you, for, being blind, she must resign the pleasure of seeing you. Her opinion is of some weight in the world of Paris. At present she is a rigid Choiseulite, but then she is a woman of much sense and reason; one who observes closely and judges dispassionately. I should very much like, the next time you give me a call, that you might happen to meet with her at my house. How do you feel inclined? She is the sworn friend of *la grosse Duchesse*, mother of our ally, the Duc d'Aiguillon, whose spouse is also on excellent terms with her. It would be delightful to constrain her to take part in the affairs of the two hostile camps. What say you to the idea? is it not worth consideration?

"I am most anxious to see you again, to find myself once more at your house with *him*—he who is so kind, so good! Why, oh! why is he not better known and more justly appreciated? Adieu. I pray of you to offer my most respectful homage to our beloved master. I embrace you most affectionately, and entreat you to offer my kindest regards to the Mesdemoiselles du Barri and all my friends with you.

"Ever yours," &c.

Most certainly the woman who could write thus was one who would dare all to defend her brother, in whose behalf she was so energetic; but so deeply had this brother offended, and so weakly had he allowed himself to be drawn into the commission of a thousand acts of folly, by the proud and unbending counsels of his wife, that no interference could avail him, and I was compelled to abandon him to the King's displeasure. The Prince de Beauvau was stripped of his employments and dismissed the Royal service in disgrace, as well as deprived of his command in Languedoc. The only honour he was permitted to retain was that of President of the French Academy. Louis XV., in reality, evinced so much leniency and moderation in the

matter, that the general opinion ran that the whole affair had been effected by the Duc d'Aiguillon against the wishes of the King; and the disgrace itself was but temporary, for the many excellent virtues of M. de Beauvau saved him from a complete downfall, and they have since met with a worthy and fitting recompense.

The Duc d'Aiguillon, who greatly disliked him, waited with impatience till the King should appoint him to the Ministry; but Louis XV. was in no hurry to do so. I had a long conversation with M. de Maupeou on the subject, for I began to suspect he was not playing a fair game with us. He completely exculpated himself; but this could not be done without involving the Comptroller-General, though how or why I could not distinctly comprehend; but it seemed to me evident that the Abbé Terray was endeavouring, by every possible means, to keep the Duke out of the Ministry. I was greatly irritated at this, but the Chancellor conjured me to leave the matter unnoticed for the present, hoping to bring the financier to better sentiments, and fearing likewise that a division among us might be productive of the most dangerous results.

Meanwhile I was unceasingly occupied in urging the King to keep his promise. The Duke, informed of the efforts I was making in his favour, would not run the risk of destroying my good intent by making his appearance at the battle I was about to fight for him. About the end of May he set out for his estate at Vernet, in order that his appointment, should it take place, might appear the spontaneous act of the monarch's freewill and choice. Scarcely had he quitted Paris than I began to broach the subject which lay so near to my heart. To all I advanced the King offered objections, which appeared to me as though they had been suggested to him. But I was not so easily repulsed, and fortunately the Chancellor came most opportunely to my assistance.

"Sire," said he to the King, "you have deigned to honour me with your confidence, and I am in duty bound to state to Your Majesty that mine is entirely bestowed

upon the Duc d'Aiguillon, who is the only man from whom I shall henceforward receive counsel or support."

"I have a great regard for the Duke," replied the King; "but he is displeasing to my family and the public——" He stopped.

"Then, Sire," exclaimed the Chancellor, "you must give him up to the condemnation of the Parliament of Bretagne, or that of Paris. Your Majesty has not adjudged him guilty, and therefore should treat him as though he were innocent."

This argument seemed unanswerable, and Louis XV., yielding to our representations, appointed the Duc d'Aiguillon Minister of Foreign Affairs on the 5th of June, 1771. This was not the post he desired; he would have greatly preferred the direction of the War Office, but our utmost efforts were unable to obtain it for him. As for the Abbé Terray, he made a virtue of necessity, and appeared perfectly satisfied at having our friend for a colleague; but we, who knew his thoughts upon this particular, were not the dupes of his feigned approbation.

CHAPTER XIV

Madame du Deffant—The King of Sweden at Paris—His conversation with Louis XV.—The Duc de Sudermania—Letter from Madame du Barri to Gustavus III.—That Prince's reply—He communicates to Louis XV. his ulterior projects—He sends a magnificent present to the Countess's dog—Observation of Louis XV.—The English ambassador and a French Prince—Marriage of the Comte de Provence—The Comtesse de Provence—M. de Caëtsloquet—The Abbé de Besplas—The Marquis d'Avaray—The Marquis de Montesquiou-Fezensac—The Comtesse de Valentinois—The Duchesse de la Vauguyon—The Comte d'Artois in his youthful days.

THE letter of the Maréchale de Mirepoix must have appeared obscure to you in more than one point. I shall therefore give you a few hints of the personages mentioned therein, and more particularly as to Madame du Deffant, a lady of high birth and great attainments, now far advanced in years, but who lived till about nine years after the period I am speaking of. She had passed her life much as the generality of ladies of her rank usually do—that is to say, in a mixture of folly and thoughtlessness—and, as report said, she had commenced her search after pleasure at a very early age, abandoning herself freely to the allurements by which she was surrounded. Nevertheless, this giddy levity appears in no way to have compromised her reputation, and her errors were all forgotten and forgiven in consideration of her birth, her numerous connections with the most distinguished persons in the kingdom, and still more were they excused by the richness of her mind and the cultivation of her understanding. When maturer years had corrected the flightiness of her conduct, without improving or purifying her heart (for she never appears to have possessed one), she retired to the convent of St. Joseph, where, although blind, she continued until her death

to assemble around her the best society of Paris. She was the intimate friend of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and all the principal literati of the day. Among the number of her female acquaintances were Mesdames de Luxembourg, de Mirepoix, de Boufflers, de Forcalquier, d'Aiguillon, de Beauvau, de Choiseul, de Crussol, &c. Among her male visitors, were MM. de Choiseul, de Beauffremont, de Beauvau, de Lauzun; and you may guess, by the names I have mentioned, that access to her saloons might be requested without any derogation to the parties soliciting a favour more frequently asked than accorded.

Devoted to the Choiseuls, to whom she was allied, and bound to them still further by a friendship which, on her side, existed without any real foundation, unless it were the advantages which this acquaintance procured for her, she attached herself to their house and fortunes with the most zealous regard, espousing their interests with a warmth and activity that knew no bounds. She spared no means of annoying me; sometimes seeking to wound me by the bitter sarcasm of her letters and writings, and occasionally publishing the severest epigrams upon me. These attempts to injure me, although affording just cause for complaint, I pardoned, from consideration for the Duc d'Aiguillon, whose wife and mother were amongst the number of her friends. Madame de Mirepoix and herself mutually exchanged visits; nor did the wide dissimilarity of taste between these ladies oppose any bar to an intimacy which appeared the more extraordinary from the incongruous qualities with which their union was made up. But at Court, where real friendship meets with but few votaries, it requires but slender motives to induce even friends to enlist under opposing banners. Parties are attacked or defended with equal indifference; and it matters little whether one is asked to afford a cold and passive favour, or to carry on a system of warfare upon the same heartless principles. Thus it is a point of no difficulty to live one day in a state of hostility against certain parties, and the next, to glide into a species of truce, which, as occasion may require, may almost insen-

sibly be converted either into peace or war—the one just as solid and stable in its fundamental principles as the other.

Such a one was the Marquise du Deffant, with whom my friends sought to bring me on visiting terms, but I ever refused. I had received too much offence from the manner in which she had spoken of me in her correspondence with the Englishman Walpole—a correspondence of which I had many opportunities of judging whenever the Postmaster-general laid the letters from his office before the King.

Although Louis XV. had a great objection to receive at his Court any of the foreign Princes who were desirous of visiting France, there were yet several who, notwithstanding all difficulties, came from afar to see and admire the wonders of Paris. Amongst the number was the Crown Prince of Sweden, who, in the full expectation that ere long the sceptre of Sweden would pass into his hand, was traversing Europe incognito, as the Comte de Haga, to perfect himself in the art of governing. Louis XV. received the young hero with less reluctance than he generally manifested upon such occasions, and soon became fascinated with his ingenuous manners, set off as they were by an urbanity truly Parisian. The King was so warm in his commendation of this son of the North that my curiosity was excited, and I begged that I might have the gratification of seeing him at supper. I had heard that he professed to care but little for our sex; that he was a second Hippolytus—cold, haughty and indifferent; and that his heart was as icy as that of the first of that name. This account only augmented my desire of judging for myself how far this reputation was merited; and I can only say that whilst in my presence and within the range of my observation, I found him as pleasing as he was handsome; nor could I discover in his warm and animated glances any of that apathy with which he had been charged. His conversation was pleasing in the highest degree, and delighted me as well as the King, whose favour he was anxious to obtain,

no doubt with a view to forward the great political stroke he meditated.

"Comte de Haga," said Louis XV., "Sweden is a fine kingdom."

"It would," replied the person addressed, "make a fine province of France. Its inhabitants are Frenchmen in their hearts; and, for my own part, I feel myself more than ever bound to France by the gracious and flattering reception Your Majesty has been pleased to afford me."

This compliment was uttered as rapidly as thought.

"Your constitution," said I, "if I mistake not, inclines somewhat to the monarchical?"

"Every country, madam," replied he, "has its own peculiar laws, to which its subjects are bound to submit."

These words were accompanied by a smile so ironical, and so little in accordance with the sentiments he expressed, that I could not help surmising he would avail himself of the first favourable opportunity that occurred to shake off this pretended submission, and the result has proved that I was not mistaken in my conjecture.

The Comte de Haga was accompanied by his brother, the Duc de Sudermania, who, unless I am greatly deceived, is not destined to acquire the high renown of Gustavus III. His sinister look was far from inspiring the same prepossession in his favour, nor was he gifted with the winning frankness which so strongly characterised his brother. These two Princes, delighted at seeing and enquiring into everything worthy of observation, could, with the most easy condescension, lay aside their high rank; and this effectual appeal to the confidence of all ranks made their appearance at Paris the most successful *début* that had been made by Royalty within the oldest recollection.

It was on the 1st of March, 1771, that the Crown Prince received at Paris the news of his father's decease. Thus invested with regal honours whilst traversing the world as a private individual, immediately that the information reached him, he hastened to despatch Comte Scheffer to Versailles, to communicate the important tidings to the

King. Louis XV. was still in bed when the envoy extraordinary arrived; nevertheless, that he might give the young monarch a proof of his regard, he caused M. Scheffer to be admitted to his bedside. The latter, having paid his respects, and announced the accession of the young and handsome traveller to the throne, Louis XV. enquired whether the new King of Sweden was desirous of being henceforward received with Royal honours; adding that, if so, the necessary orders should immediately be issued. The Count replied that His Swedish Majesty would prefer retaining his incognito for the present, and would wish still to be considered only as the Comte de Haga.

The next day I wrote the following letter to this Prince:

"SIRE,—I would fain be amongst the first to congratulate Your Majesty upon your accession to the throne of your ancestors. I am sensible how ill a tone of compliment and rejoicing must accord with your present grief for the author of your days; but remember that the same blow which has rendered you an orphan has placed you at the head of a numerous family. The Swedes have become your children, and have a just claim to fill the void left in your heart by the loss of a parent. The pleasing discharge of duties so new and gratifying will insensibly wean Your Majesty from the deep sorrow which at present overwhelms you. Deign to accept the ardent prayers which I most sincerely form for the length and prosperity of your reign, as well as my sentiments of deep respect.—I remain," &c.

Gustavus III. lost no time in replying as follows:

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—Your welcome letter came most opportunely to rouse me to a sense of proper exertion under the heavy calamity which has just befallen me. I purchase my newly-acquired sceptre at a dear price, since it is bought with a parent's life; and already do my brows ache with the weight of the diadem which is as yet so new to them.

"You do me justice in believing that I shall devote myself to the welfare of my people. I know that many difficulties lie in my way ere I can succeed in rendering my subjects happy (it may be) in spite of themselves; but I feel within me a courage and devotion to my country at least equal to making the attempt, and I venture to rely upon the co-operation of my friends, amongst the most powerful and valued of whom I reckon the monarch of France. I flatter myself that you, madam, will aid me in preserving my place in His Majesty's remembrance, and accept likewise the respectful assurances of the sincere attachment I shall ever entertain for you—a regard which I pray of you to submit to any proof. Repeating that it will at all times afford me the most lively satisfaction to convince you of my fidelity,—I am," &c.

Such were the first diplomatic notes exchanged between

France and Sweden; they were merely the preludes to greater and more important treaties, which were speedily entered into. The King of Sweden invited himself to supper, entreating me to suffer none but the Chancellor, the Duc d'Aiguillon and a third person, whom he did not venture to name, but at whose hands he had a great favour to solicit, to be present. I showed his note to Louis XV., who easily guessed that the third person alluded to was himself. He promised me to attend with the Duc de Duras. "And should the King of Sweden have aught to speak of in private," added he, "the good Duke will never suspect the importance of the matters upon which we confer."

Gustavus III. made his appearance, attended only by Comte Scheffer, who enjoyed his entire confidence. He seemed disappointed at the sight of M. de Duras; and, when I repeated what Louis XV. had said respecting him, he smiled, and answered, "Nevertheless, madam, I must be silent in his presence." I communicated these words to the King, who caused the Duc de Duras to be informed immediately by the Chancellor that a council was about to be held, at which his presence would not be required; but the same intimation requiring the absence of the Duc d'Aiguillon, he was forced to retire also, to our great regret. When the two monarchs, the Chancellor, Comte Scheffer and myself were alone, Gustavus III. opened the conversation by announcing his firm resolution of claiming back from the seditious nobles those rights which they had usurped from his ancestors. He then proceeded to lay before the King the plan he proposed to follow, ending it with a request to be assisted by the counsel and protection of his Royal ally. Louis XV. promptly engaged to aid him by every possible means in the accomplishment of so magnanimous a determination.

"Your Majesty," said he, "is young, and possessed of more than usual courage. You can and ought to chastise those rebels who have dared to tear by violence from their Sovereigns those rights which they derive from God himself. You may rely upon my hearty co-operation; and, should

your own finances be unequal to defray the necessary expenses, you may freely command my purse. I am only too anxious to keep up the good understanding subsisting between our houses."

Gustavus III. was so enchanted with this frank declaration that, without considering what he was about, he seized the hand of Louis XV., and was about to press it to his lips; but the King, inclining his face towards him, exclaimed:

"Ah, my brother, let us rather ratify our newly-formed treaty by a friendly embrace."

"Sire," cried Gustavus III., throwing himself into the King's arms, "you are my second father, and may always confidently reckon upon receiving from me the tenderness of a son."

This touching scene brought tears into my eyes, and even the Chancellor exhibited symptoms of the liveliest emotion. After this the two Kings and their respective ministers conferred upon the best method of affording the Swedish Prince the assistance he claimed. Whilst this interesting discussion was taking place, I was amusing myself with my dog. Gustavus III., who perceived it, sent me the following day a collar for the little animal, composed of red morocco, with a clasp and ring of brilliants, to which was affixed a chain of more than a yard in length, composed entirely of rubies. The magnificence of this present astonished me so much the more, as the King of Sweden was by no means rich. However, this piece of gallantry was most graciously received by Louis XV., and materially heightened the favourable opinion he had conceived of the Royal stranger.

The Ducs d'Aiguillon and de Duras did not make their reappearance till supper was announced, when Comte Scheffer, taking the former aside, related to him, on the part of his master, the subject of the late negotiation. The French minister expressed so much devotion to the interests of the young King that, willing to bestow upon him a particular mark of his friendship, he invited him to supper with his

wife and mother, a distinction to which these ladies were wholly unaccustomed, except through the interest of the Marquise du Deffant. This was a fresh motive for jealousy to the Choiseul party, who expressed their rage and indignation at finding the King of Sweden more intent upon the affairs of his kingdom than eager to show his knight-errantry by undertaking a journey to Chanteloup.

When Gustavus III. had retired, Louis XV. expressed his admiration of him with the utmost candour. "Unless I greatly mistake," added he, "our noble young Swede will one day rival Prussia in power and extent of dominion. I own I shall not be sorry to see my prediction fulfilled, and I will gladly afford my best aid to assist him; besides, I like to find my example has power to lead others to imitate it. His Senate resembles my Parliament. Nothing can be more dangerous for monarchs than those debating assemblies where subjects have the audacity to treat their masters as though they were their equals, and even to attempt to hold them in subjection. I would not be King of England for one year if I were compelled to endure the insupportable prosing of the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

These expressions of the King recall to my recollection the language held by one of his grandsons long after the death of this monarch. It was about the period of the American War. The English Parliament had compelled George III. to dismiss his ministers. The haughty and noble French Prince could not conceive the possibility of there existing in a kingdom a body sufficiently influential to constrain the Sovereign pleasure in the choice of his ministers, and he expressed his opinion with some warmth in the presence of His Britannic Majesty's ambassador.

"If," said he, "ministers are to be dismissed because the Parliament does not think proper to approve of them, a stable-boy is better off than the King of England."

"Sire," replied Lord Stair, somewhat coarsely, "that must depend upon a man's tastes and habits."

He thought he said a very clever thing, for nothing equals the assurance with which the English will sometimes uphold

their Kings, and, when occasion serves, degrade them. There exists indeed a singular mixture in that nation of the grand and the contemptible. For my own part, I could never see any just cause for looking upon the Kings of England as fit objects for pity; notwithstanding all their affected grievances, their Parliament seems ever liberally to grant them whatever subsidies they desire.

Louis XV. had no idea of resistance without fair and open warfare, and he never thought of the Parliament of Paris without picturing to himself the existence of a league against him, or, rather, the return of the days of La Fronde.

This year was celebrated the marriage of the Comte de Provence, then little more than fifteen years of age, with the Princesse Marie Josephine Louise of Savoy, who was about two years older than her husband. This excellent young lady, whose many virtues justly entitled her to the love of the whole nation, was unfortunately very plain; in vain might you examine her features—not one redeeming point could be found. Louis XV. had deemed himself in a manner compelled to marry his grandson at so early an age that he might thereby put an end to the many unfavourable reports which were afloat respecting the tastes and habits of this young Prince, both of which were severely discussed.

However, the eagerness with which he welcomed his bride served effectually to re-establish him in the opinion of both married and single. On the other hand, the young and innocent Princess displayed the most undisguised affection for her youthful partner, as well as eagerness for the performance of the rite which united them for life; and it was with much difficulty that they were restrained from too openly exhibiting their mutual fondness in the presence of the whole Court.

The Comte d'Artois, who was still quite young, rallied his brother upon the exceeding energy and loudness of tone with which, in the nuptial ceremony, he had made the responses.

"Do you know," said he, "that you answered 'I will' so loud that the room re-echoed with it?"

"I could have wished," replied the Comte de Provence,

with his accustomed sweetness of temper, "that the sound had reached from Paris to Turin."

The establishment of the newly-married pair had undergone my strictest scrutiny, and I was well acquainted with each individual who composed it, so eagerly had the ill-naturedly-disposed hastened to lay before me every necessary particular.

M. de Caëtsloquet, first almoner, and former bishop of Limoges, tutor to the Ducs de Berri and Burgundy, the Comtes de Provence and d'Artois, and member of the French Academy, owed his good fortune rather to his talent for intrigue than his merit, for he was, in fact, a man of very ordinary capacity. Always gloomy and disposed to find fault, he was a species of bugbear to the young Princes, who were reduced to obedience at the first glance of his unpromising countenance.

The Abbé de Besplas, the descendant of a noble family in Lower Languedoc, possessed, on the contrary, a great depth of learning. He was as clever as he was amiable, and fortune might have served him better had he not had the folly to depend upon his own merit instead of having recourse to intrigue. This uncommon error was, in my opinion, the only hindrance to his obtaining the archiepiscopal mitre.

The Marquis de Caumont and the Duc de Laval were the first gentlemen of the chamber. Amongst the gentlemen of honour, those who were principally indebted to me for their nomination were the Chevalier de Béarn and the Marquis de Furnet, who was related to the Comte d'Hargicourt, my brother-in-law.

The Marquis d'Avaray was one of the keepers of the wardrobe. This gentleman, who is at the present time high in the favour of the Prince, is endowed with many excellent qualities, but he laboured under the disadvantage of a great want of manner, and never obtained a place among the names of agreeable persons any more than being enrolled amidst the *beaux esprits* of Versailles.

But, to compensate for the paucity of talent hitherto mentioned, there was one member of the household whose

claims to first-rate reputation as a man of wit and genius none thought of disputing—this was the Marquis de Montesquiou-Fezensac, first groom. Cunning, crafty, yet polished and highly agreeable, he was admired and courted by all. He possessed a fine taste for poetry, and was himself the author of some beautiful verses, of which the Comte de Provence not unfrequently borrowed the credit until he should be able, some bright day, to compose some of his own. The Marquis was descended from a very ancient family, whom he asserted were once Counts of Gascoigne. This was laying claims to a tolerably high descent, but still it was insufficient to gratify his love of caste; and, not long afterwards, he gave himself out as a descendant of the Dukes of Aquitaine. The public allowed him to settle it in his own way, without being credulous enough to believe every fresh account he was pleased to give of his genealogy, and yet without taking the trouble of contradicting him; but M. de Montesquiou, encouraged by this sort of half-silence, made no difficulty of affirming seriously that he belonged to the Merovingian race, in a direct line from Clovis, and, consequently, boasting of an origin as illustrious as that of the King. But the House of Bourbon was not greatly alarmed at these vast pretensions, although, for its own part, it could trace its ancestry no further than Robert the Strong, whose father or grandfather could never be exactly ascertained. M. de Montesquiou was overwhelmed with jokes upon the subject of his birth; and he, by way of silencing those who laughed at his expense, caused his genealogy to be printed, and copies to be widely circulated, whilst from this moment, *nolens volens*, he styled himself the first lord of the kingdom. The rest of the inmates of this mansion were all amiable; and the Abbé de Montesquiou, who is now the Agent-general of the Clergy, will not falsify what I assert. The Comte de Provence's head groom still preserves a great ascendency over the mind of his master; in this respect he is the counterpart of M. d'Avaray, although far superior to him in manner and external polish.

The Comte de Montbarrey was appointed commander

of the Swiss Guards of the Comte de Provence. You know my opinion of this gentleman; and, since you have seen him at the head of the War Department, you may be enabled to judge how far I have been severe in my estimation of his character. He possessed, in its highest degree, that most insufferable of all pride—the pride of fools.

The captain of the guard of honour was the Comte de Langeac, a man of much talent, who owed his situation to the Duc de la Vrillière, who regarded him with the affection of a father. This same nobleman had likewise, at the recommendation of the Marquise de Langeac, elevated the Chevalier d'Arcy to the high dignity of *head falconer and chief master of the ornithological collection of His Highness the Comte de Provence*—a title respectable enough in itself, but which the grandeur of the master did not entirely secure from ridicule.

The first lady of honour to the new Comtesse de Provence was the Comtesse de Valentinois, my intimate friend, a very superior woman, although somewhat flighty in her conduct, and one of the few who repaid the obligation she conceived herself under to me for obtaining her the post she held, by showing me every mark of gratitude and attention when I was deprived of my own. I saw much of her, and found her always the same—gay, charming and open-hearted. The Princess could not long retain the feelings of dislike which had been instilled into her to the prejudice of Madame de Valentinois, and she ended by attaching herself to her with the sincerest regard.

The Duchesse de la Vauguyon was the second lady of honour. She was indeed a striking contrast to the Comtesse de Valentinois: serious and grave, the severity of her character was impressed in harsh lines upon her rigid countenance. She possessed much wit, which she sedulously concealed, lest it might compromise her own dignity and that of Her Royal Highness the Comtesse de Provence, were she to indulge in the exercise of it.

I might swell my list of ladies who made up the retinue

of the young Countess, but I forbear to tire your patience further. They were, for the most part, nonentities, of whom neither good nor bad could be related, and I will close my account in the words which Augustus used to Cinna:

"Le reste ne vaut pas l'honneur d'être nommé."

The marriage of the Comte de Provence was for a long time the subject of conversation in our private apartments, as well as in those of the Dauphin. The contrast of the manners of the two husbands, and their conduct towards their august spouses, amused us greatly. Whilst the Comte de Provence, more warm, more ardent in all his feelings than his brother, was incessantly occupied in affectionate and tender cares for his young bride, whom he loaded with caresses, the Duc de Berri, more timid and retiring in his nature, still only presumed to treat the Dauphiness with the respectful fondness of a beloved sister. Louis XV., who found much to interest him in this display of a purely fraternal affection, held many conferences upon a subject which baffled all his endeavours to account for.

But the youngest of the Princes, the Comte d'Artois, required all the watchful solicitude of the Duc de la Vauguyon. This young Prince was of a most impetuous and impatient temperament; quick, volatile and headstrong, he spurned all restraint; whilst tenacious of the least attempt at depriving him of his liberty, he only plunged more eagerly into pleasures wholly unfit for his tender years. The poor Duke, who would fain have placed himself on a level with the Montausiers and the Beauvilliers, exerted himself in vain to restrain his hot and ungovernable pupil, who each day committed fresh acts of folly and absurdity. Sometimes the object of his pursuits was a *femme de chambre*, at others, the modest wife of some subaltern officer, whose heart he sought to win by his honeyed words and flattering promises; and it not unfrequently happened that he descended even lower in his intrigues—in short, the Comte d'Artois was a miniature resemblance of Henry IV. The Duke wore the flesh off his bones in following, watching and preaching to his hopeful charge, but it was time thrown

away; the giddy boy was deaf to all advice which sought to shut him out of the constant society of the fair sex, for whom alone he seemed to live and care. This early indication of so strong an admiration for female beauty impressed everyone with the idea that he would, when age should have more sobered his youthful effervescence, become the most gallant of French chevaliers, as he already was one of the most pleasing and captivating.

All this impetuosity found a ready excuse in the mind of Louis XV., who seemed to see his own image revived in the gay and indiscreet young Prince; and, in spite of himself, he ever treated the Comte d'Artois with a marked preference. This Prince was likewise the general favourite throughout the Castle. He possessed the candour of the Dauphin without his unpolished rudeness and abruptness, and the amiability of the Comte de Provence without partaking of his pedantry and reserve—the latter quality, indeed, in the Comte de Provence, closely bordered upon dissimulation. For the present I will take leave of the Comte d'Artois, though I shall have occasion to bring him again before you in the course of these memoirs. You will have perceived that he shared my favour and regard as well as that of his grandfather, and it will be with equal pleasure that I shall again occupy my pen with him.

And now, my friend, I am about to proceed to another subject much more painful to me—the recital of my quarrels with the Dauphiness. The greater the lapse of time between the period when I had the folly to enter the lists against this illustrious Princess, the more bitterly do I reproach myself for the acts of unpardonable folly committed by me when under the influence of foreign instigation, or misled by the intoxication of power.

CHAPTER XV

Origin of the misunderstandings between the Dauphiness and Madame du Barri—The Mesdemoiselles Clairon and Dumesnil—The Baron de Breteuil—Prince Louis de Rohan—The Abbé Georgel—The King's opinion of the Prince de Rohan—The Prince is appointed ambassador to the Court of Vienna—Anecdote of an evening at Bellevue.

I HAD many faults, my dear friend, and prosperity had not so far dazzled my senses as to make me unmindful of them; but, now that time brings with it more mature reflection, I do not pass a single day without reproaching myself with my past folly, although I might attempt to palliate it by pleading the intoxicating flattery and homage of which I was the sole object, and the crowd of admiring sycophants who bestowed an indiscriminate praise upon my every action, whether good or bad, all the while they were meditating how best to turn it to their own advantage. Nevertheless I may do myself the justice to assert that my vanity and self-love never induced me to believe myself a model of perfection, or to lead me to visit the full weight of my anger upon the heads of those who had the misfortune to be disagreeable to me; and, however delicious I found the cup of flattery, its contents, though eagerly drained, never disturbed my brain so far as to commit an act of oppression or retaliation. Even those who disliked me—and the number was by no means small—cannot refuse to admit that I am neither ill-natured nor vindictive; that I have endured provocations long ere I would avenge them; and even when my interest loudly and imperiously compelled me to oppose the attempts of my enemies, I have punished merely the ringleaders of the faction. One thing I may boldly lay claim to—that of all the mistresses

of the King of France I was the one who caused the fewest tears to flow. This is a truth none can deny, and it is awarding me no trifling praise.

I shall observe no particular order of time in the recital of my quarrels with the Dauphiness, my chief aim being to relate them with equal sincerity and regret. I shall go back to the commencement of our misunderstandings and lay before you with the utmost candour every transaction, whether to my praise or censure. The arrival of the Archduchess in France in all the splendour of her rank, her age, beauty, wit and virtues, could not fail of being highly displeasing to me. I dreaded lest she might acquire over the mind of the King that ascendency to which she had so just a claim, and, still further, that she would employ to my prejudice the many gifts with which heaven had endowed her. Her marriage, effected by the Duc de Choiseul, had naturally given that minister a large share in her good graces; besides which I well knew that the Princesses, who no longer sought to conceal their aversion to me, were impatiently awaiting the arrival of the young Dauphiness that they might, in concert with her, effect my ruin. The Dauphin had openly evinced the unfavourable nature of his sentiments towards me. The King was feeble in purpose and timid by nature, unstable in his own disposition, and not very prone to rouse himself to any particular exertion for the preservation of his friends. All these reasons combined to excite within me a spirit of jealousy, distrust and uneasiness, as well as to convince me that peace would not reign long between the Dauphiness and myself. Already, in imagination, I saw her surrounded by my enemies, her head filled with prejudices against me, first despising me—a thought of all others the most insupportable—then excited by those who sought my destruction to look with a jealous eye upon the power and credit I possessed with the King as usurping that influence and sway she had a natural right to exercise over the mind of her Royal relative. And what might I not expect from her anger and vexation should I succeed

in bringing about the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul, the constant subject of my most earnest efforts? I dreaded likewise her youth, her beauty, and her many graces; and I often detected myself wishing that some imprudent or indiscreet action might mar the all-powerful enchantment caused by her *début* at Court.

These violent and ungovernable feelings frequently urged me to the commission of the wildest acts of folly, and the despairing efforts I made to counteract the growing power of my young and fascinating rival were mistaken for the most implacable hatred, while, in reality, they were but the natural consequences of an over-excited mind. I have before related to you the gracious reception bestowed upon me by the young Dauphiness at her first arrival in Paris; but things were not permitted to go on smoothly. The Duc de Choiseul first contrived to place the Comtesse de Noailles about the person of Marie Antoinette, knowing full well that Madame de Noailles would willingly lend her aid in any way to punish one whose unconscious offence of obliging her husband to surrender for my use the apartments he occupied in the Palace of Versailles had never been forgiven. Next to her came the Duchesse de Luxembourg, who personally disliked me, and asserted that I had been heard to ridicule the Dauphiness for her empty pretensions to beauty—an imputation which, at the time it was first circulated, was utterly false; but, unhappily, my evil star led me on to the fullest commission of such an imprudence, and everybody knows that we may doubt anything with greater impunity than the just claims of a female to supreme beauty. A thousand compliments paid afterwards are unable to efface the recollection of an objection once raised.

The Duc de la Vauguyon also took part against me. Dissatisfied with me for withholding my confidence from him, he endeavoured to rouse the animosity of the Dauphin against me by pointing out to him the glaring impropriety of admitting me into his wife's presence, declaring that the very sight of me might sully the virtuous reputation of the

Dauphiness, with a thousand calumnies equally absurd. Too easily led by the counsels of his former preceptor, the Dauphin at first contented himself with forbidding Marie Antoinette from treating me with her accustomed condescension. He next prohibited those gracious smiles and marks of kindness, the absence of which I easily perceived; and their suppression did not a little tend to irritate my mind and to kindle within me the most hostile feelings towards the members of the Royal Family. The first occasion upon which I manifested my enmity and opposition was one of very little consequence, which I will relate to you.

Mademoiselle Clairon, an actress possessed of no very transcendent talent, enjoyed the favour of the Duc de Choiseul, and consequently the high patronage of the Dauphiness.

Although she had already quitted the Comédie Française, party interest had secured for her a place on the boards of the King's private theatre, to the great injury of Mademoiselle Dumesnil, a most accomplished actress, who was entirely absorbed in her profession, and whose little taste for intrigue rendered her the victim of all manner of injustice. Supported by the august protection of the Dauphiness, Mademoiselle Clairon obtained from the Maréchal de Richelieu, who could offer no opposition, permission to play the part of Athalie. She perfectly murdered the part, and I expressed my delight in the most unqualified manner at her want of success.

The better to expose her want of talent, I contrived to obtain leave for Mademoiselle Dumesnil to appear in the part of Sémiramis. To render the triumph of this delightful performer still more effective, I sent her a robe worth fifty louis, lent her my diamonds, and formed a most formidable party to support her. She did not disgrace my patronage; her acting was the perfection of her art, and completely crushed the pretensions of her rival. My evident participation in her joy was pointed out by my enemies to the Dauphiness, and, whilst it roused her indignation, excited in her mind the most irreconcilable hatred against me.

On the other hand, the Dauphin, taking a share in his wife's sentiments, declared that were he certain Dumesnil had been a conscious agent in my scheme for annoying the Archduchess he would horsewhip her in my presence. When this was repeated to me, I unluckily replied that if he did it would be the first act of manhood he had ever performed. This cutting blow reached its destination, the Princess shed bitter tears over it, and complained to the King, who denied it as altogether impossible, and expressed his vexation at finding her capable of listening to such absurdities; adding that if he could discover either the inventor or propagator of the falsehood he would have them severely punished.

The Princesses were not slow in taking part in the quarrel, protesting to their niece that if she allowed her balls and parties to be profaned by my presence they must for the future be excused from attending; and the Dauphiness, respecting these preconcerted notions of her aunts, forbore to invite me. I was deeply wounded by this stroke of malice, and in my turn shed tears over it, while Louis XV., well-disposed to look upon this mode of treating me as a personal offence and indirect censure upon his own conduct, seized the first opportunity of demanding of the Dauphiness the reason of the neglect I had so much reason to complain of.

Marie Antoinette replied that her Royal aunts having expressed a repugnance to meet her, she had considered it a duty to prefer their company to that of a stranger, but that nevertheless, if His Majesty expressly laid his commands upon her, I should certainly be invited.

I have before told you how greatly Louis XV. disliked exercising Sovereign power, especially in the bosom of his family. This was well known to the advisers of the Dauphiness, who had therefore provided her with this reply, as being most calculated to embarrass the King should he (as was most probable) speak to her on the subject; and so it proved, for Louis XV., taken by surprise, knew not what to say. He therefore changed the conversation as quickly as he could, and returned to me without having effected anything.

Irritated at the manner in which the thing had terminated,

thanks to the weakness of the King, I formed the design of presenting myself by force at the next fête given by the Dauphiness, and so compelling Louis XV. to openly espouse either one side or the other. Happily for me one of my friends, the Duc de Cossé Brissac, diverted me from this project, pointing out to me how dangerous it might prove for me thus openly to attack the Princess, as well as prejudicial to my interests to weary the King's ears by continual reproaches. I yielded to the counsels of this friend, who already possessed great ascendency over me; but my self-love was deeply wounded, and it was more than probable that I should let no opportunity escape me of taking vengeance upon the authors of the insult.

Some days after this the conversation fell in my presence upon the Dauphiness, whose surpassing beauty and graces were loudly extolled. "Let who will admire her," cried I; "for my part I see nothing very attractive in red hair, thick lips, sandy complexion, and eyes without eyelashes; and had she who is thus beautiful not sprung from the House of Austria, such attractions would never have been the subject of admiration."

The auditors of this unlucky speech were the Ducs d'Ayen, de Duras, de Richelieu, and de Cossé-Brissac, the Marquis de Chauvelin, the Prince de Soubise, the Comte de Boisgelin, and several other noblemen, whose names I forget. They listened in silence, but my words did not fall to the ground; three or four of my visitors hastened to take leave that they might relate so rich an anecdote to some fair friend or other, who in their turn made all possible haste to carry it to the Dauphiness as a sure method of paying their Court to her. However, as styling a Princess ugly could not be converted intc high treason, the Dauphiness was compelled to bear it with patience, and stifle her vexation till a fitting season. Nevertheless our quarrel, which had before been a sort of half-suppressed hatred, broke out from this circumstance into open and declared war.

Things were at this stage when the Dauphiness refused to be present at the review at Fontainebleau, and to dine beneath

the tent which the Comte du Châtelet had caused to be pitched in the wood. When this nobleman presented himself before Marie Antoinette to invite her to the fête, her first enquiry was, "Will the Comtesse du Barri be there?" She was answered in the affirmative. "In that case, sir," replied the Princess, full of disdainful feelings, "she may take my place, for I will never endure her presence."

The Comte du Châtelet had strong claims upon my gratitude for his kindness in concealing this conversation from all but myself, but the Dauphiness could not deny herself the gratification of boasting of what she had said and done, and this was no small consolation to the almost expiring party of the Choiseuls; but I soon had the laugh on my side when, declining further warfare with Her Royal Highness, I assailed the Duke, who had hitherto directed all the attacks of my enemies; and the fall of this minister, who, as the Archduchess knew, had had the principal hand in effecting her marriage, caused her the most lively chagrin. In vain did she apply to the King to avert the threatened blow; he remained immovable and unshaken in the resolution with which I had inspired him. The Dauphiness bewailed the disgrace of the Duc de Choiseul so much the more as her accurate study of her husband's character fully convinced her that, should he be at the head of affairs upon his accession, he would abandon the administration entirely to him, but that he would certainly never recall him if he once happened to be dismissed. She regretted equally the irreparable loss of so warm a friend to the House of Austria, in which she as yet felt more interest than in that of France.

Anticipating the approaching storm, the Choiseuls had endeavoured to avert its consequences by providing themselves with an ally at the Court of Vienna, and for this purpose caused the Baron de Breteuil to be appointed ambassador there, as he had been previously at St. Petersburg. The Baron was a diplomatist without one qualification to fit him for the office, like a certain species of rock often found, solid in exterior, which returns a hollow ringing

noise if struck against; and to the opinion of persons as superficial as himself he is alone indebted for a reputation of which he has never shown himself worthy, either in his embassies, or when at the head of a ministry temporarily confided to him. Headstrong, vain and meddling, filled with self-love and confidence in his own merit, while he looked down contemptuously upon the rest of the world; overflowing with malice, hatred and revenge, he was the occasion of that odious trial respecting the necklace, in which he implicated the sacred name of the Queen the better to revenge himself upon the Cardinal de Rohan, who had replaced him at Vienna. The affair was as follows:

At the breaking up of the frost the Baron de Breteuil, who had been recently appointed to the embassy, had not yet set out upon it, but was still pursuing his amusements at Paris; nor did it accord either with our interests or the view we took of things that he should ever reach his destination. It would have been bad policy indeed on our parts to choose for our representative with the Empress a man entirely devoted to our enemies, and who, favouring their guilty designs, would have permitted a chain of intrigues most important for us to break to continue unmolested from Versailles to Vienna. But where were we to find a person who, equally eminent for his rank and estimation in society as was the Baron de Breteuil, could be put in his place without affording just cause for the carpings of our enemies? The Duc d'Aiguillon had been for some time in quest of an eligible successor to the Baron, when Madame de Marsan, who never lost sight of the interests of her house, proposed Prince Louis de Rohan, then the colleague of the Bishop of Strasbourg, his uncle, subsequently Cardinal and Grand Almoner of France. Never did any unlucky idea bring with it so many fatal consequences.

Prince Louis de Rohan was a most superficial and uninformed man; equally destitute of morality as of information, he was unable to support the credit of his name in any profession. Vain, fickle and profligate, the professed admirer of the fair sex, of all ranks and conditions, he

was for ever at a loss for money, which he obtained in any manner, honourable or otherwise, taking freely but never repaying; he was consequently over head and ears in debt, although possessing an immense fortune; and because a troop of mercenary flatterers, by whom he was constantly surrounded, told him he was clever, learned and erudite, he believed himself to be the Mæcenas of the age; he was well made, and carried himself with dignity; haughty with his equals and good-humoured with his inferiors, he was yet so besotted with pride that he could not perceive how entirely he was destitute of all which might have excused or supported the ardent ambition which devoured him.

His family were equally anxious to place him on a theatre where his want of talent and capability would fully show itself. Madame de Marsan and Madame de Soubise tormented M. d'Aiguillon respecting him. M. d'Aiguillon repeated their entreaties and arguments to me, and soon my ears rung with no other sound than Prince Louis de Rohan. Then it was I first became acquainted with a man who was his right hand, or rather his head, for the poor Prince possessed so little a brain that he might scarcely be reckoned to possess one—this was the Abbé Georgel, his grand vicar and Mentor, an ex-Jesuit, and consequently supple, crafty, enthusiastic, thoughtful and systematically malicious; the sworn enemy of the Choiseuls, whom he hated both body and soul, because they had brought down ruin upon his order. Concealing his own ambition behind that of his patron, and already hating the Dauphiness, simply because that Princess evinced an affection for the Duc de Choiseul, we easily devised that the Abbé Georgel should be the veritable ambassador, whilst M. de Rohan would be satisfied with the title and the honours; but we were far from supposing that if he left to his agent the care of his affairs, he would reserve to himself the direction of his follies and extravagances, carried to so frightful an excess as could not fail to compromise our responsibility.

At first the Duc d'Aiguillon was sensible only of the joy of having found a great nobleman whom he might oppose to the Baron de Breteuil, he therefore offered but slender resistance to the entreaties of De Rohan; and for my own part, I easily consented to the nomination which procured me a gracious smile from Madame de Marsan, but not the thanks of the Princesse de Guémenée.

Prince Louis saw in the new appointment but a fresh means of augmenting the mass of his debts. He solicited permission to borrow 600,000 livres upon his benefices, and vowed to us the most boundless devotion. Louis XV., who very rightly judged the man, said to me: "Such an ambassador is sufficient to turn France into ridicule at the Court of Austria; he is a juggler, not a diplomatist; he will want to meddle with affairs at Vienna, and, if he does, will certainly disgrace my name. Such is my opinion; but I wash my hands of it."

The Duc d'Aiguillon, who was present, remained speechless, and was about to give up Prince de Rohan, when I interrupted his purpose, by replying to the King:

"If, Sire, the present choice of an ambassador be disagreeable to you, Your Majesty is the master, and can alter it to your pleasure; it will merely require talking over with Madame de Marsan."

These last words made the King start, and he would willingly have invented embassies for all the Rohans rather than have been constrained to oppose that haughty Princess, whom he both feared and esteemed at the same time. "No, no," replied he; "I will not meddle with it. I repose my confidence in the Duc d'Aiguillon, and it is upon him the responsibility must fall."

We had gained our point, and M. d'Aiguillon strove to extol the merits of Prince Louis, but it was lost labour; the King knew his man too well. We then spoke of the Abbé Georgel, who would follow the Prince and act as his adviser. "Be it so," said Louis XV., "but let him not loosen the child's leading-strings too much, and all may go well."

The Baron de Breteuil, furious at such a mischance,

vowed an implacable hatred to Prince Louis. We wished to calm him by offering him an equivalent to the post of which he had been deprived, but the thing was not so easily managed; every post was occupied. At last we appointed him ambassador to Naples. His rage against the minister and myself knew no bounds, and if I have not felt the dire effects of it, it has been no fault of his. He would very willingly have mixed me up in the famous affair of the necklace; in what manner I will relate to you when I come to that part of my story.

The Dauphiness did not conceal her dissatisfaction at this diplomatic mutation. She would fain have had the Baron de Breteuil at the Court of her mother, partly because of the great attachment he professed for the Duc de Choiseul, and partly because she herself disliked the Prince de Rohan. It is true that this latter had scarcely received his appointment than he gave himself up to fresh extravagances and the preparation for the most magnificent appearance at Vienna, vainly expecting to attain consequence and consideration by the number of his train and splendour of his equipages.

Mortified at the preference manifested by the Dauphiness for the Baron de Breteuil, he still further augmented the anger of this Princess by neglecting, most unwisely, to go and request her commands before his departure. This contemptible pride was so much the more ridiculous as it was aimed at the first lady in Europe; and so inexcusable a neglect of his duties, in a point which the situation of his mission rendered so important, irritated the Dauphiness to such a degree that she openly accused me of seeking to offend her by sending to Vienna a man whom the Empress-Queen would certainly view with displeasure.

The great Marie Thérèse affected about that time an austerity of manners, which would naturally make her view with pain near her Royal person an ecclesiastic as worldly and dissipated as Prince de Rohan, a man much more capable of scandalising the bigots than of edifying the people. This was not our manner of either seeing or judging things at Versailles, and the last reflection had never occurred to us.

We led a life so indolent and gay that, in our eyes, a Prince of the Church could have no fault if he were but of high birth, and was courteous and gallant towards ourselves. I must own that, in many instances, common sense appeared to have been banished the Castle; but so it was, and we did not give a thought to bringing about a reformation, which, in point of fact, none supposed to be necessary.

Such were the principal causes which brought about an open struggle between the Dauphiness and myself. Her husband, who thoroughly hated me, contented himself with offering me such childish annoyances as the following, which my enemies took pains to circulate throughout France. We were at Bellevue, and had already sat down to dinner, when all at once the Dauphin arrived *by accident*. I was seated at the right of Louis XV., and consequently I occupied his place. He walked directly up to me as though to claim it, when, anticipating his purpose, I rose and offered him my chair, making him at the same time a low and respectful curtsey. He did not expect that I should thus deprive him of the opportunity of openly offering me an act of unpoliteness; he just cast upon me a look full of vexation and rage, and, muttering between his teeth some species of compliment, sat down hastily. The King bit his lips and remained silent for some time; but, recovering himself by degrees, he strove to make amends for the rudeness of his grandson by treating me with the most marked kindness during the whole of the dinner. As for me, delighted at having the laugh on my side, I ate my dinner with an excellent appetite, and, far from sitting sullenly, as my enemies were pleased to state, I continued in the highest and happiest spirits during the whole of the evening.

CHAPTER XVI

The Comte and Comtesse de Provence make conciliatory overtures to Madame du Barri—Madame du Barri and the Marquis de Montesquiou-Fezensac—Regret of the Princes—The Princesse de Conti and Madame du Barri—Dissatisfaction of the King—The Countess bestows her protection upon artists—Men of letters—M. de Maupeou—The Abbé Terray, the Ducs de Richelieu, de la Vrillière and others—Lalande the astronomer—Marmontel and La Harpe.

WHILST my unthinking conduct was thus daily widening the breach between myself and the virtuous and august pair who were destined one day to ascend the throne of France, a Prince of the Blood Royal evinced every disposition to be upon good terms with me, and even commissioned a gentleman of his establishment to converse with me upon the subject. I am to this day ignorant of the motives which actuated this proceeding. The particulars of the transaction are as follows:

The hatred with which both the Dauphiness and Dauphin regarded me was no secret at Court. Many expressed their astonishment that I did not seek to anticipate the vengeance they would one day or other wreak upon me, and gloomy hints of assassination and poison began to be whispered throughout the Castle; but I contented myself with avenging my wrongs in a manner more consonant to the feelings of my heart, and, far from seeking the life of those who had offended me, I directed all my endeavours to falsify that beauty the Dauphiness so justly prided herself in, and by this means only more fully demonstrated how little I cared for truth or justice where my angry feelings were excited.

Whilst these things were going on I received several visits in the interval of a very few days from the Marquis de Montesquiou, first gentleman in waiting to His Royal Highness the Comte de Provence. This unusual assiduity surprised

me, and I could not forbear speaking to my sister-in-law Chon of the multiplied attentions I was now honoured with from that nobleman.

"Excellent," said my sister-in-law, with her usual penetration; "and do you imagine this gay bird frequents your drawing-rooms only to display his own warbling? No such thing; as surely as possible he is merely the envoy of some great and powerful person."

"Whom can you allude to?" I asked.

"Oh, sister," answered Chon, "you can be very simple sometimes. Just think in whose service the Marquis is, and the next time he comes turn the conversation upon his master."

It was not long before the Marquis de Montesquiou afforded me the desired opportunity by repeating his visit. I welcomed him with pleasure. He was a very agreeable man, possessing a peculiar conversational talent, yet mistaken in his estimation of himself; for, whilst he deemed himself clever and well-informed, he was merely superficial in his knowledge. Still, as a mere drawing-room companion, it was impossible to object to him or feel weary of his company. Profiting by the counsel of Chon, I made many enquiries after the Comte and Comtesse de Provence, extolling the former in the highest terms.

"I am delighted," exclaimed the Marquis, "to find so reciprocal a feeling existing between yourself and His Royal Highness, whose sentiments respecting you are of the most flattering nature; and, however unfavourable the heads of some establishments may be towards you, I can assure you it is quite the reverse with my illustrious patron."

"It gratifies me to hear so pleasing an assurance," I answered, "and the kindness of the Comte de Provence will enable me to bear with more patience the insults I am exposed to from other members of his family."

"In that case, madam," rejoined M. de Montesquiou, "I am commissioned to offer you the fullest pledge of the warm friendship entertained for you by the Comte and Comtesse de Provence."

"This would indeed be imposing a heavy weight of gratitude upon me," I cried; "but still it is a debt I shall most gladly pay."

"My master," added M. de Montesquiou, "is not yet properly appreciated. He will one day be, without doubt, the first personage in the kingdom, and with the aid of friends and opportunity will play an important part."

"Friends!" I exclaimed. "Surely it is not in the region of a Court you would seek for such creatures! Mere mercenary slaves may be had in abundance at any price, but no friends."

"His Highness is well aware of the lamentable truth of your assertion, madam, and would therefore wish to create for himself ties of affection, and inspire a mutual feeling of regard in the minds of all those he feels himself disposed to love. Why, madam, permit me to ask, have *you* not endeavoured to attract his notice and obtain his friendship? It would be to the advancement of both your interests."

"Believe me, sir," said I, "the fault is not mine. At Versailles you know it is the fashion to frown upon me, and to treat me as though I were some stray deer, whom all the rest of the herd might drive away or beat to death."

"Be satisfied, madam," interrupted M. de Montesquiou, "that you are looked upon in a very different light by the Prince I have the honour to serve."

"I pray of you, then," I said, "to convey to their Royal Highnesses the expressions of my profound respect and devoted attachment."

Fresh company being then announced the conversation ended.

From that time their Royal Highnesses treated me with the most flattering marks of distinction; they even invited me to a splendid fête. It would seem that the Dauphin and Dauphiness had complained to their brother and sister-in-law of their intimacy with me, for all at once, without any cause or reason, the Comte and Comtesse de Provence resumed their original distance and reserve, and the Marquis de Montesquiou by degrees ceased his accustomed

visits. I was cruelly vexed at seeing a friendship so frankly offered me thus destroyed. Nevertheless I smothered my angry feelings, and imitated my enemies in the closest observance of every prescribed form of politeness; but when I subsequently encountered M. de Montesquiou, I spoke to him of the vacillating conduct both of himself and his master, to which he replied, "Your pardon, madam; but we could not make up our minds to force so lovely a woman into a political intrigue."

The period of which I am now speaking was not at all favourable to a part of the Royal family or the Princes of the Blood. I forget whether I told you that in consequence of the refusal of these latter to be present at the installation of the new Parliament, they were not directly exiled, but were requested in a more civil and polite manner to abstain from approaching Versailles. They would willingly have defied the King's resentment, but their heroism sank from its altitude when they perceived that their allowances, which had been hitherto paid in the form of additional pensions, were now stopped; besides, they were not a little jealous of the Comte de la Marche, who consoled himself for the public dislike by drawing largely upon the Royal treasury. Our faithful friend received in this year alone about 800,000 livres, and Madame de Mirepoix received as the reward of her good and loyal services a perpetual grant of 100,000 livres per annum. You see that I paid a good price for the devotion of my friends.

Meanwhile the Princes of the Blood were employing every means to effect a reconciliation with me. One day I saw the Princesse de Conti enter my apartment without the least ceremony. She was an old lady, justly revered by myself and all mankind for her many virtues and rare qualities. I was utterly unprepared for this visit, and, confused at the unexpected honour done me, endeavoured to show my sense of her condescension by every attention in my power, whilst I listened anxiously to hear the extraordinary motive which had induced her to present herself at my door. She assured me that she came with the best possible intentions; that her

desire was to pacify things and allay the present agitation of mind, but to effect this my aid would be necessary. She added:

"Many ill-disposed persons are anxious to create a quarrel between you and the Princes. Be very careful, my child! You are placed in a critical situation, and whatever unfortunate events may occur, depend upon it they will be severely visited upon your head. You are accused of measures taken long since, and there exists a strong and obstinate feeling to trace every unfavourable action to your influence. The people and the Court are equally irritated against you, and should a misfortune which I will not venture to anticipate occur, you would remain alone and unprotected, a mark for public hatred to expend its violence upon. Why not seek to create for yourself some sure resting-place? A safe and sure asylum is open to you in espousing the cause of the Princes; if you uphold them in their present difficulties, gratitude will compel them to protect you in their turn, nor will they ever forsake you."

"Alas, madam!" said I, "how can I help it if it is the pleasure of their Highnesses to contradict and thwart the King in his projects? It is rating my influence far too highly to imagine I can have any power to alter the great political measures of His Majesty. Was not the destruction of the Parliaments the inevitable consequence of the struggle which has lasted from the commencement of the reign of Louis XV.? It was not my doing. With regard to your hints for my safety, I know very well how precarious is my existence, and I must confess that the thoughts of the future give me very little concern; but what I really regret is to be mistaken for the enemy of the Princes of the Blood, when I would willingly prove my attachment to them by every possible means."

"I am tempted to take you at your word," replied the Princesse de Conti.

"Believe me," I said, "I will not falsify it."

"Well, then, you would be the most excellent creature alive," cried the Princess, "if you could prevail on the King

to command the restoration of the private pensions of the Princes."

"Doubtless, madam," I replied, "these pensions are very desirable things; but would it not be better for the Princes to obtain a perfect reconciliation with the King?"

"I see numerous difficulties to that measure," answered the Princess; "His Majesty will not renounce his new Parliament, and the Princes will never acknowledge it but upon certain conditions."

"I understand," cried I; "they will never cease their opposition till they find it their interest so to do."

The Princesse de Conti, who possessed a quick and ready wit, understood my meaning, and smiled at my observation. She repeated all her former arguments, and I engaged to use my endeavours to satisfy the Princes, with which Her Serene Highness expressed herself much pleased, and retired charmed with her visit.

Shortly after she had left me the Chancellor arrived, to whom I related all that had passed. M. de Maupeou pointed out to me that the sole aim and purpose of the Princes in seeking my favour was to procure the restoration of their pensions; that it was utterly impossible for them ever to afford me the least protection or to render me any service. He added, "We no longer live in those days when the interference of a Prince of the Blood could avert the anger of a King. Two centuries ago their refusal to acknowledge a Parliament would have thrown the kingdom into a state of ferment from one end to the other; but now, although they have protested against the new Parliament, they are merely dispensed from appearing at it; and, while they grow sullen at the little notice they have the power to excite, they are utterly ignored; they are, in fact, mere citizens like myself, courtiers in the castle and disgraced men in the city. What protection could they afford you when they are compelled to solicit yours?"

Just then the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Abbé Terray entered; we related to them the subject of conversation, and they both agreed with the Chancellor in his view of

the case. It was therefore agreed that I should return the visit with which the Princesse de Conti had honoured me, and inform her I found it impossible to effect anything with the King in favour of the exiled Princes.

However, when I saw His Majesty in the evening, I communicated to him their message. "Upon my word," cried Louis XV., "I admire their effrontery; they think proper to refuse me the obedience to which I am justly entitled, and yet they ask for my money. No, no, *parbleu!* Not one farthing shall they see of it till they return to their duty. Let them resume their proper allegiance, and I may then listen to their request; this is my determination; tell the Princesse de Conti so."

This, by the way, was a piece of intelligence not very pleasing to be the bearer of. Nevertheless, on the following day, I went to pay my visit to the Princess. I told her that I attempted, but vainly, to move the King in favour of the Princes, but that His Majesty refused to listen to any argument until they evinced a perfect submission to his will. "For my own interests and preservation," I said, "I must confide in the justice of my Sovereign, and trust that it will never fail me at any period." The Princess replied very coolly, and permitted me to depart without observing the most trifling rule of common civility towards me. When the Princes learned the result of their scheme they were filled with the bitterest rage. It was upon this occasion that they endeavoured to circulate a most infamous song respecting me. You have perhaps heard it, but should you not have done so, both my self-love and modesty forbid my transcribing it. Louis XV. sought by redoubled attentions to recompense me for so many annoyances; he even felt gratified when he saw his ministers assemble at my house to prepare the papers for the morrow's business. These ministerial despatches were always submitted to me, but it was a mere form, for I never could be made to understand anything of politics.

I understood just as much of the fine arts, of which, nevertheless, I was passionately fond. Every morning I was besieged by artists of every description—sculptors, engravers,

architects, musicians, &c. Painters disputed the honour of transferring my features to their canvas: one represented me as a Bacchante, another as Diana, and a third as Venus.[1] I followed, in some measure, the example of *le bourgeois gentilhomme*, paying according to the excellence of the divinity whose attributes were bestowed on me—so much for a Bacchante, so much for Diana, so much for Venus. God knows how much my portraits cost me, not one of which was even a passable likeness, with the exception of that drawn by Greuze, who was the only artist at all successful in catching a likeness.

If artists had cause to praise my liberal protection, on the other hand men of letters had little cause to bless my name. One good reason for my neglect of them was that, of all the persons by whom I was surrounded, not one had any taste for literary men. I have already given you the King's opinion upon these gentlemen; that of the Chancellor was by no means more favourable. M. de Maupeou said to me: "Men of letters are good for nothing but to write books; in matters of policy there is no dependence to be placed on them; they are either servile flatterers or impertinent censors; they are a species of the human race with whom it behoves us to be on our guard."

The Maréchal de Richelieu cordially detested all his academical brethren; he would fain have led them at his pleasure, and their resistance rendered him perfectly furious. M. d'Alembert, for instance, was hateful to him; the Marshal could never pardon that celebrated writer for the air of respect, mingled with dignity, with which he repulsed his impertinent familiarity.

The poor Duc de la Vrillière was well paid for his dislike to *beaux esprits;* he was overwhelmed with vaudevilles and epigrams, and the only happiness he ever enjoyed was whenever he received His Majesty's commands to send such or such an author to the Bastille.

The Abbé Terray was worse still; he execrated literature

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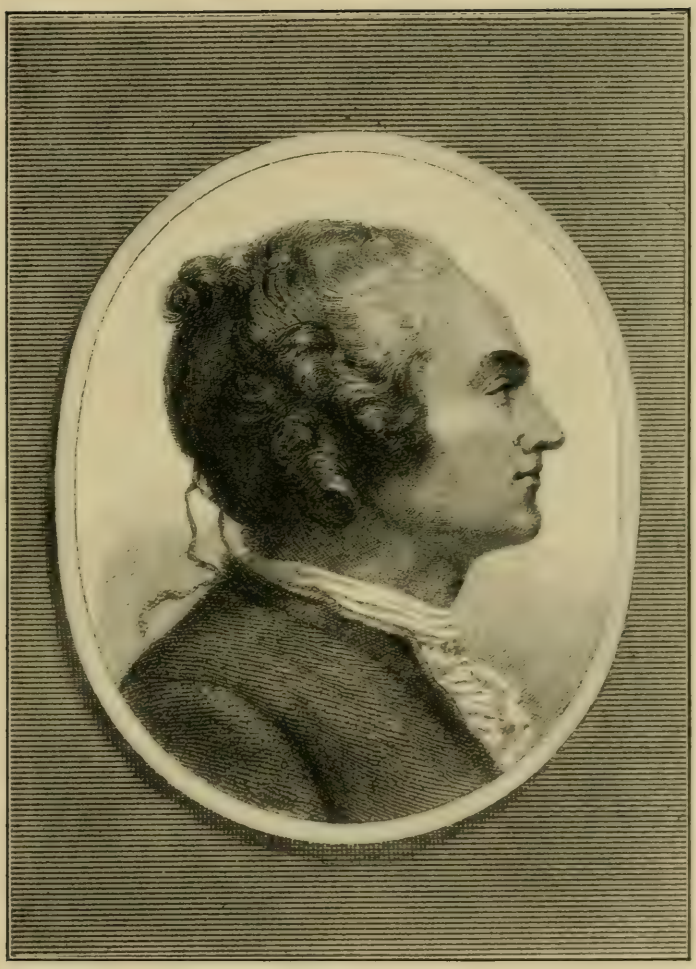
1 *Vide* Appendix.



and all professional men, of whom he never spoke but in the most contemptuous terms, and with a tone of the most decided disgust. The money he paid them from the King seemed to him a sort of tribute paid to thieves; and, if only for the very disagreeableness of this part of his office, he would willingly have changed functions with M. de la Vrillière. The abbé was not sufficiently careful to conceal his sentiments; and if he should hereafter obtain an ill name, he will have to attribute it to the revenge of men of letters.

The Duc d'Aiguillon, until his unfortunate contest with the long robes, had always shown himself the constant protector of *beaux esprits*, but after the fall of the Choiseuls and the Parliaments his *protégés* abandoned him. Writers of prose and writers of poetry equally turned against the successful minister; he was assailed by a torrent of pamphlets, epigrams, libels and songs, which, you may be very sure, did not tend to set matters upon a more friendly footing between him and the literary world.

The Ducs d'Aumont, de Duras and de Fleury were no greater favourites amongst the literati of the day; the former had particularly attracted the animadversion of the philosophers by his senseless persecution of Thomas and Marmontel; besides this, the two passed for great simpletons, and I cannot take upon myself to say they did not well deserve their reputation.

Comte Jean had certainly a strong natural taste for literature, but then he was a determined gambler, and a game of chance would have driven from his recollection the finest geniuses of ancient or modern times.

Thus I had not a single friend who might have inspired me with a desire to protect authors: I had indeed too many personal affairs to occupy my attention to have much to bestow on this class of persons; I treated them with scant ceremony, yet they were constantly asking permission to read their writings to me. Would you believe, for instance, that the astronomer Lalande pursued me during two whole years to give me the treat of hearing I know not what work upon the harmony of the celestial bodies? It was in vain I sought

to excuse myself under plea of my utter ignorance of such matters; he persisted in his request, and I in my refusal, till, in the end, I converted the unsuccessful candidate for my patronage into an enemy.

MM. Marmontel and La Harpe were likewise disposed to swell the number of my suppliants, but I was disgusted by their pride and inferiority of talent; I therefore dismissed them from my saloons, and thereby incurred their rooted enmity.

These are some of the reasons for my want of favour with the literary world; nevertheless, as you shall hereafter learn, I was not able to refuse my admiration to the most celebrated amongst them.

CHAPTER XVII

A few words respecting Jean Jacques Rousseau—Madame du Barri is desirous of his acquaintance—The Countess visits Rousseau—His household furniture—His portrait—Thérèse—A second visit from Madame du Barri to Rousseau—The Countess relates her visit to the King—Note from Rousseau to Madame du Barri—The two Duchesses d'Aiguillon.

In spite of the little estimation, generally speaking, in which I held men of letters, you must not take it for granted that I entertained an equal indifference for all these gentlemen. I have already, I fear, tired your patience when dwelling upon my ardent admiration of M. de Voltaire. I have now to speak to you of that with which his illustrious rival, Jean Jacques Rousseau, inspired me; the man who, after a life so filled with constant trouble and misfortunes, died a few years since in so deplorable a manner.

At the period of which I am now speaking, this man, who had filled Europe with his fame, was living at Paris in a state bordering upon indigence. I must here mention that it was owing to my solicitation that he had been permitted to return from his exile,[1] I having successfully interceded for him with the Chancellor and the Attorney-General. M. Seguier made no difficulty to my request, because he looked upon Jean Jacques Rousseau as the greatest enemy to a set of men whom he mortally hated—the philosophers. Neither did M. de Maupeou, from the moment when he effected the overthrow of the Parliament, see any objection to bestowing his protection upon a man whom the Parliaments had exiled. In this

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1 Jean Jacques Rousseau returned to Paris in the month of July 1770.

manner, therefore, without his being aware of it, Rousseau owed to me the permission to re-enter Paris. In spite of the mortifying terms in which this celebrated writer had spoken of the King's mistresses, I had a lively curiosity to know him. All that his enemies repeated of his uncouthness, and even of his malicious nature, far from weakening the powerful interest with which he inspired me, rather augmented it, by strengthening the idea I had previously formed of his having been greatly calumniated. The generous vengeance which he had recently taken for the injuries he had received from Voltaire particularly charmed me.[1] I thought only of how I could effect my design of seeing him by one means or another, and I was confirmed in this resolution by an accident which befell me one day.

It was the commencement of April, 1771, I was reading for the fourth time the "Nouvelle Heloïse," and for the tenth, or, probably, twelfth time, the account of the party on the lake, when the Maréchale de Mirepoix entered the room. I laid my open volume on the mantelpiece, and the Maréchale, glancing her eye upon the book I had just put down, smilingly begged my pardon for disturbing my grave studies, and taking it in her hand, exclaimed:

"Ah! I see you have been perusing the "Nouvelle Heloïse." I have just been having more than an hour's conversation respecting its author."

"What were you saying of him?" I asked.

"Why, my dear, I happened to be at the house of Madame de Luxembourg, where I met with the Comtesse de Boufflers."

"Yes, I remember," I said, "the former of these ladies was the particular friend of Jean Jacques Rousseau."

"And the second also," she answered; "and I can promise you that neither spoke too well of him."

"Is it possible?" I exclaimed, with a warmth I could not repress.

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1 Rousseau, in his journey through Lyons (June, 1770), subscribed for the statue of Voltaire.

"The Duchess," resumed Madame de Mirepoix, "says he is an ill-bred and ungrateful man, and the Countess insists that he is a downright pedant."

"Shameful, indeed!" I cried. "But can you, my dear friend, account for the ill-nature with which these ladies speak of poor Rousseau?"

"Oh, yes," replied the Maréchale, "their motives are easily explained; and I will tell you a little secret, for the truth of which I can vouch. Madame de Luxembourg had at one time conceived the most lively passion for Jean Jacques."

"Indeed!" I cried, "and he——"

"Did not return it. As for Madame de Boufflers, the case was exactly reversed: Rousseau has excited her resentment by daring long to nurse a hopeless flame, of which she was the object. This presumption on the part of the poet our dignified Countess could never pardon. However, I entreat of you not to repeat this; remember, I tell you in strictest secrecy."

"Oh, be assured of my discretion," I said. "I promise you not to publish your secret" (which, by the way, I was very certain was not communicated for the first time when told to me).

This confidence on the part of the Maréchale had, in some unaccountable manner, only increased the ardent desire I felt to see the author of the "Nouvelle Heloïse," and I observed to Madame de Mirepoix that I had a great curiosity to be introduced to Rousseau.

"I fear," said she, "you will never be able to persuade him to visit at the Château."

"How, then, can I accomplish my desire of seeing this celebrated man?"

"By one simple method: if he will not come to you, you must go to him. I would willingly accompany you, but he knows me, and my presence would spoil all. The best thing you can do is to dress yourself quite plainly, as a lady from the country, taking with you one of your female attendants. You may take as a pretext for your visit some music you

would wish to have copied. Be sure to treat M. Rousseau as a mere copyist, and appear never to have heard of his superior merit. Do this and you will receive the best possible reception."

I greatly approved of the Maréchale's advice, which I assured her I would delay no longer than till the following day to put into practice; and, after some further conversation upon Rousseau, we parted.

Early the next day I set out for Paris, accompanied by Henriette. There, in accord with the suggestion of Madame de Mirepoix, I dressed myself as a person recently arrived from the country, and Henriette, who was to accompany me, disguised herself as a villager. I assure you our personal attractions lost nothing by the change of our attire. From the Rue de la Jussienne to the Rue Plâtrière is only a few steps; nevertheless, in the fear of being recognised, I took a hired carriage. Having reached our place of destination, we entered, by a shabby private door, the habitation of Jean Jacques Rousseau; his apartments were on the fifth floor. I can scarcely describe to you, my friend, the emotions I experienced as I drew nearer and nearer to the author of "Heloïse." At each flight of stairs I was compelled to pause to collect my ideas, and my poor heart throbbed as though I had been keeping an assignation. At length, however, we reached the fifth story; and after having rested a few minutes to recover myself, I was about to knock at a door which was opposite to me, when, as I approached, I heard a sweet but tremulous voice singing a melancholy air, which I have never since heard anywhere. The same voice several times repeated the romance to which I was listening. When it had entirely ceased, I profited by the silence to tap with my knuckles against the door, but so feeble was the signal that even Henriette, who was close behind me, could not hear it. She begged I would permit her to ring a bell which hung near us; and, having done so, a step was heard approaching the door, and in a minute or two, it was opened by a man of about sixty years of age, who, seeing two females, took off

his cap with a sort of clumsy gallantry, at which I affected to be much flattered.

"Pray, sir," said I, endeavouring to repress my emotion, "does a person named Rousseau, a copier of music, live here?"

"Yes, madam; I am he. What is your pleasure?"

"I have been told, sir, that you are particularly skilful in copying music cheaply. I should be glad if you would undertake to copy these airs I have brought with me."

"Have the goodness to walk in, madam."

We crossed a small obscure closet, which served as a species of ante-chamber, and entered the sitting-room of M. Rousseau. He offered me an arm-chair, and, motioning Henriette to sit down, once more enquired my wishes respecting the music.

"Sir," said I, "as I live in the country and but very rarely visit Paris, I should be obliged to you to get it done for me as early as possible."

"Willingly, madam; I have not much upon my hands just now."

I then gave to Jean Jacques Rousseau the roll of music I had brought. He begged I would continue seated, requested permission to keep on his cap, and went to a little table to examine the music I had brought.

Upon my first entrance I had perceived a close and confined smell in these miserable apartments, but by degrees I became accustomed to it, and began to examine the chamber in which I sat with as strict a scrutiny as though I had intended making an inventory of its contents. Three old elbow-chairs, some rickety stools, a writing-table, on which were two or three volumes of music, some dried plants laid on whity-brown paper; beside the table stood an old spinet, and close to the latter article of furniture sat a fat and sleek cat. Over the chimney hung an old-fashioned watch. The walls of the room were adorned with about half-a-dozen views of Switzerland and some inferior engravings; two only, which occupied the most honourable situations, struck me: one represented Frederick II.,

and underneath the portrait were written some lines (which I cannot now recollect) by Rousseau himself; the other engraving, which hung opposite, was the likeness of a very tall, thin, old man, whose dress was nearly concealed by the dirt which had been allowed to accumulate upon it; I could only distinguish that it was ornamented with a broad riband.[1] When I had sufficiently surveyed this chamber, the simplicity of which—so closely bordering on want and misery—pained me to the heart, I directed my attention to the extraordinary man who was the occasion of my visit. He was of middle height, slightly bent by age, with a large and expansive chest. His features were common in their cast, but possessed of the most perfect regularity. His eyes, which he from time to time raised from the music he was considering, were round and sparkling, but small, and the heavy brows which hung over them conveyed an idea of gloom and severity; but his mouth, which was certainly the most beautiful and fascinating in its expression I ever saw, soon removed this unfavourable impression. Altogether, there belonged to his countenance a smile of mixed sweetness and sadness which bestowed on it an indescribable charm.

To complete my description I must not forget to add his dress, which consisted of a dirty cotton cap to which were fixed strings of a riband that had once been scarlet, a pelisse with armholes, a flannel waistcoat, snuff-coloured breeches, grey stockings, and shoes slipped down at the heel after the fashion of slippers. Such was the portrait, and such the abode of the man who believed himself to be one of the potentates of the earth, and who, in fact, had once owned his little court and train of courtiers; for in the century in which he lived talent had become as arbitrary as Sovereign power—thanks to the stupidity of some of our grandees and the caprice of Frederick of Prussia.

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1 Probably the likeness of the Lord Marshal. As for the verses written beneath the portrait of Frederick II., they are mentioned in his "Confessions," and are as follows:

"Il pense en philosophe, et se conduit en roi."

—Editor's Note.

Meanwhile my host, undisturbed by my reflections, had quietly gone over the packet of music. He found amongst others an air from the *Devin du Village*, which I had purposely placed there. He half-turned towards me, and, looking steadfastly in my face, as if he would force the truth from my lips:

"Madam," said he, "do you know the author of this little composition?"

"Yes," I replied, with an air of as great simplicity as I could assume; "it is written by a person of the same name as yourself, who writes books and composes operas. Is he any relation to you?"

My answer and question disarmed the suspicions of Jean Jacques, who was about to reply, but stopped himself as if afraid of uttering a falsehood, and contented himself with smiling and casting down his eyes. Taking courage from his silence, I ventured to add: "The M. Rousseau who composed this pretty air has written much beautiful music, and many very clever works. Should I ever know the happiness of becoming a mother I shall owe to him the proper care and education of my child." Rousseau made no reply, but he turned his eyes towards me, and at this moment the expression of his countenance was perfectly celestial, and I could readily imagine how easily he might have inspired a warmer sentiment than that of admiration.

Whilst we were conversing in this manner, a female, between the age of forty and fifty, entered the room. She saluted me with a great affectation of politeness, and then, without speaking to Rousseau, went and seated herself familiarly upon a chair on the other side of the table. This was Thérèse, a sort of factotum, who served the master of these apartments both as servant and mistress. I could not help regarding this woman with a feeling of disgust. She had a horrid cough, which she told us was more than usually troublesome on that day. I had heard of her avarice; therefore, to prevent the appearance of having called upon an unprofitable errand, I enquired of Jean Jacques Rousseau how much the music would cost.

"Six sous a page, madam," he replied, "is the usual price."

"Shall I, sir," I asked, "leave you any cash in hand for the purchase of what paper you will require?"

"No, I thank you, madam," Rousseau replied, smiling. "Thank God, I am not yet so far reduced that I cannot purchase it for you. I have a trifling annuity——"

"And you would be a much richer man," screamed Thérèse, "if you would only insist upon those people at the Opera paying you what they owe you." These words were accompanied with a shrug of the shoulders, intended to convey a vast idea of her own opinion.

Rousseau made no reply; indeed, he appeared to me like a frightened child in the presence of its nurse, and I could quickly see that from the moment of her entering the room he had become restless and dejected; he fidgeted on his seat, and seemed like a person in excessive pain. At length he rose, and requesting my pardon for absenting himself, he added, "My wife will have the honour to entertain you whilst I am away." With these words he opened a small glass door and disappeared in the neighbouring room.

When we were alone with Thérèse, she lost no time in opening the conversation.

"Madam," she cried, "I trust you will have the goodness to excuse M. Rousseau; he is very unwell; it is really extremely vexatious."

I replied that M. Rousseau had made his own excuses. Just then Thérèse, wishing to give herself the appearance of great utility, cried out:

"Am I wanted there, M. Rousseau?"

"No, no, no," replied Jean Jacques in a faint voice, which died away as if at a distance.

He soon after re-entered the room.

"Madam," he said, "have the kindness to place your music in other hands to copy. I am truly concerned that I cannot execute your wishes, but I feel too ill to set about it directly."

I replied that I was in no hurry; that I should be in

Paris for some time yet, and that he might copy it at his leisure. It was then settled that it should be ready in a week from that time; upon which I rose, and ceremoniously saluting Thérèse, was conducted to the door by M. Rousseau, whose politeness led him to escort me thither, holding his cap in his hand. I retired filled with admiration, respect and pity.

When next I saw the Duc d'Aiguillon, I could not refrain from relating to him all that had happened. My recital inspired him with the most lively curiosity to see Rousseau, whom he had never met in society. It was then agreed that when I went to fetch my music he should accompany me, disguised in a similar manner to myself, and that I should pass him off as my uncle. At the end of the week I repaired early, as before, to Paris. The Duke was not long in joining me there. He was so inimitably well disguised that no person would ever have detected the most elegant nobleman of the Court of France beneath the garb of a plain country squire. We set out laughing like simpletons at the easy air with which he wore his new costume; nevertheless our gaiety disappeared as we reached the habitation of Rousseau. In spite of ourselves we were compelled to honour and respect the man of talent and genius, who preferred independence of idea to riches, and before whom rank and power were compelled to lay aside their unmeaning trappings ere they could reach his presence. When we reached the fifth landing-place I rang, and this time the door was opened by Thérèse, who told us M. Rousseau was out.

"But, madam," I answered, "I am here by the direction of your husband to fetch away the music he has been engaged in copying for me."

"Ah, madam," she exclaimed, "is it you? I did not recollect you again; pray walk in. M. Rousseau will be sure to be at home to you."

"So then, thought I, even genius has its visiting lists. We entered. Jean Jacques formally saluted us and invited us to be seated. He then gave me my music, and I enquired

what it came to. He consulted a little memorandum which lay upon the table, and replied, "So many pages, so much paper, eighteen livres twelve sous," which of course I instantly paid. The Duc d'Aiguillon, whom I styled my uncle, was endeavouring to lead Rousseau into conversation, when the outer bell rang. Thérèse went to open the door, and there entered a gentleman of mature age, although still preserving his good looks. The Duke regarded him in silence, and immediately made signs for me to hasten our departure. I obeyed, and took leave of Rousseau, with many thanks for his punctuality. He accompanied us, as before, to the door, and there I quitted him never to see him more. As we were descending the staircase M. d'Aiguillon told me that the person who had so hastened our departure was Duclas, and that his hurry to quit Rousseau arose from his dread of being recognised by him. Although M. Duclas was a very excellent man, I must own that I owed him no small grudge for a visit which had thus abridged ours.

In the evening the Duc d'Aiguillon and myself related to the King our morning's pilgrimage. I likewise recounted my former visit, which I had concealed until now. Louis XV. seemed greatly interested with the recital of it; he asked me a thousand questions, and would fain hear the most trifling particulars.

"I shall never forget," said Louis XV., "the amazing success obtained by his *Devin du Village*." There certainly were some beautiful airs in that opera, and the King began to hum over the song of "J'ai perdu tout mon bonheur."

"Yes, madam," continued His Majesty, "I promise you that had Rousseau after his success chosen to step forward as a candidate for public favour, he would soon have overthrown Voltaire."

"Pardon me," I replied; "but I cannot believe that would have been possible under any circumstances."

"And why not?" asked the King. "He was a man of great talent."

"Doubtless, Sire; but not of the kind to compete with Voltaire."

The King then changed the conversation to Thérèse, enquiring whether she possessed any attractions.

"None whatever, Sire," replied the Duke; "at least, none that we could perceive."

"In that case," rejoined His Majesty, "she must have charmed her master by some of those unseen perfections which take the deepest hold of the heart. Besides, I know not why we should think it strange that others see with different eyes to ourselves."

I made no secret with the Comte Jean of my visit, and he likewise expressed his desire to know a man so justly celebrated; and, in its proper place, you shall hear how he managed to effect this, and what befell him in consequence. But, to finish for the present with Rousseau (for I will not promise that I shall not again indulge in speaking of him), I will just say that after the lapse of two or days from the time of my last visit, the idea occurred to me of sending him a thousand crowns in an Indian casket. This I sent by a servant out of livery, whom I strictly enjoined not to name me, but to say simply that he came from a lady. He brought back the casket to me unopened, and the following note from Rousseau:

"MADAM,—I send back the present you would force upon my acceptance in so concealed a manner. If it be offered as a testimony of your esteem, I may possibly accept it when you permit me to know the hand from which it comes. Be assured, madam, that there is much truth in the assertion of its being more easy to give than to receive.—I have the honour to remain, madam,

"Yours, &c.,

"J. J. ROUSSEAU."

This was rather an uncouth manner of refusing; nevertheless, when at this distance of time I review the transaction, I cannot help admitting that I well deserved it. Perhaps when it first occurred I might have felt piqued; but since I have quitted the Court I have again read over the works of J. J. Rousseau, and I now speak of him, as you see, without one particle of resentment.

I must now speak to you of a new acquaintance I made about this period—that of the two Duchesses d'Aiguillon.

From my first entrance into the Château until the close of 1770, Madame d'Aiguillon, the daughter-in-law, observed a sort of armed neutrality towards me. True, she never visited me, but she always met me with apparent satisfaction at the houses of others; thus she managed to steer clear of one dangerous extreme or the other till the downfall of the Choiseuls; when the Duc d'Aiguillon having been nominated to the Ministry, she perceived that she could not, without great ingratitude, omit calling to offer me her acknowledgments, and accordingly she came. On my side I left no means untried to render myself agreeable to her; and so well did I succeed that from that moment her valuable friendship was bestowed on me with a sincerity which even my unfortunate reverses have been unable to shake; and we are to this day the same firm and true friends we were in the zenith of my power. Not that I would seek to justify the injury she sought to do our Queen, but I may and do congratulate myself that the same warmth which pervades her hatreds likewise influences her friendships.

I cannot equally boast of the treatment I received from the Dowager Duchess d'Aiguillon, who, as well as her daughter-in-law, came to see me upon the promotion of her son. She overloaded me with caresses, and even exceeded her daughter-in-law in protestations of devotion and gratitude. You should have heard her extol my beauty, wit and sweetness of disposition; she, in fact, so overwhelmed me with her surfeiting praises that at last I became convinced that, of the thousand flattering things she continually addressed to me, not one was her candid opinion; and I was right, for I soon learned that in her circle of intimates, at the houses of the Beauffremonts and the Brionnes, and, above all, at the Marquise du Deffant's, she justified her acquaintance with me by saying it was a sacrifice made to the interests of her son, and amused these ladies by censuring my every word and look. The Dowager's double-dealing greatly annoyed me; nevertheless, not wishing to vex her son or her daughter-in-law, I affected to be ignorant of her dishonourable conduct. However, I could not long repress my indignation, and one day when she was praising me

most extravagantly, I exclaimed, "Ah, madam, how kind it would be of you to reserve one of these pretty speeches to repeat at Madame du Deffant's." This blow, so strong, yet just, rather surprised her; but quickly rallying her courage, she endeavoured to persuade me that she always spoke of me in the same terms. "It may be so," I replied; "but I fear that you say so many flattering things to me that you have not one left when out of my sight."

The Maréchale de Mirepoix used to say that a caress from Madame d'Aiguillon was not less to be dreaded than the bite of M. d'Ayen. Yet the Dowager Duchess has obtained a first-rate reputation for goodness; everyone styled her "the good Duchesse d'Aiguillon." And why, do you suppose? Because she was one of those fat, fresh, portly-looking dames of whom you would have said her very face and figure bespoke the contented goodness of her disposition; for who would ever suspect malice could lurk in so much *embonpoint?* I think I have already told you that in the month of June, 1772, this lady expired of an attack of apoplexy while bathing. Her son shed many tears at her loss, whilst I experienced but a very moderate share of grief.

Adieu, my friend. If you are not already terrified at the multiplicity of the letters which compose my journal, I have yet much to say; and I flatter myself the continuance of my adventures[1] will be found no less interesting than those you have perused.

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1 Several expressions in these Memoirs, as well as the arrangement of many chapters, sufficiently reveal that they are the faithful extracts from the correspondence of Madame du Barri with M. de V. The remaining letters contain the events up to the death of Louis XV., and are filled with anecdotes no less curious than those already before the reader.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER XVIII

The King's friends—Manner of living at Court—Education of Louis XV.—The Parc-aux-Cerfs—Its household—Its inmates—Mère Bompart—Amount expended on the Parc-aux-Cerfs—Good advice—Madame ——.

I WAS now firmly fixed at Court. The King, more than ever devoted to me, seemed unable to dispense with my constant presence. I had so successfully studied his habits and peculiarities that my empire over him was established on a basis too firm to be shaken, whilst my power and unbounded influence convinced my enemies that, so long as the present monarch sat upon the throne of France, their attempts at diminishing my credit and influence would only recoil upon themselves. Louis XV. generally supped in my apartments every evening, unless, indeed, by way of change, I went to sup with him. Our guests were, of course, of the first order, but yet not of the most exemplary morals. These persons had tact, and saw that, to please the King, they must surpass him, so that if by chance he should reflect on himself, he would appear to advantage amongst them. Poor courtiers! It was labour in vain. The King was in too much fear of knowing himself to undertake that study; he knew the penetration and severity of his own judgment, and on no account would he exercise it at his own expense.

The Duc de Duras, although a man of little wit, was yet gay and always lively. He amused me; I liked his buoyant disposition, and forgave him although he had ranged himself with the protesting peers. In fact, I could not be angry with him. The folly of opposition had only seized on him because it was epidemic. The dear Duke had found himself with

wolves, and had begun to howl with them. I am sure that he was astonished at himself when he remembered the signature which he had given and the love he had testified for the old Parliament, for which, in fact, he cared no more than Jean de Vert. God knows how he compensated for this little folly at the Château: it was by redoubling his assiduities to the King and by incessant attentions to me. In general, those who wished to thrive at Court only sought how to make their courage remembered; M. de Duras was only employed in making his forgotten.

The Prince de Terigny, the Comte d'Escars and the Duc de Fleury were not the least amusing. They kept up a lively strain of conversation, and the King laughed outrageously. But the vilest of the party was the Duc de Fronsac. Ye gods! what a wretch! To speak ill of him is no sin. A mangled likeness of his father, he had all his faults with not one of his merits. He was perpetually changing his mistresses. It cannot be said whether it was inconstancy on his part or disgust on theirs, but the latter appears to me most probable. Though young, he was devoured by the gout, or some other infirmity, but it was called gout out of deference to the House of Richelieu. They talked of the Duchesse de ——, whose husband was said to have poisoned her.

The saints of Versailles—the Duc de la Vauguyon, the Duc d'Estissac and M. de Durfort—did like others. These persons practised religion in the face of the world, and abstained from loose conversation in presence of their own families, but with the King they laid aside their religion and reserve, so that these hypocrites had in the city all the honours of devotion, and in the Royal apartments all the advantages of loose conduct. As for me, I was the same at Versailles as everywhere else. To please the King I had only to be myself. I relied for the future on my uniformity of conduct. What charmed him in the evening would delight again the next day. He had an equilibrium of pleasure, a balance of amusement which can hardly be described; it was every day the same variety—the same journeys, the same

fêtes, the balls, the theatres, all came round at fixed periods with most monotonous regularity; in fact, the people knew exactly when to laugh and when to look grave.

There was in the Château a most singular character, the Grand Master of the Ceremonies of France. His great-grandfather, his grandfather, and his father, who had fulfilled these functions for a century, had transmitted to him their understanding and their duties. All he thought of was how to regulate the motions and steps of every person at Court. He adored the Dauphin and Dauphiness, because they both diverted and fatigued themselves according to the rules in such cases made and provided. He was always preaching to me, and quoted against me the precedents of Diane de Poitiers or Gabrielle d'Estrées. One day he told me that all the misfortunes of Mademoiselle de la Vallière occurred in consequence of her neglect of etiquette. He would have had all matters pass at Court during the old age of Louis XV. as at the period of the childhood of Louis XIV., and would fain have had the administration of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, that he might have arranged all with due ceremonies.

Since the word Parc-aux-Cerfs has escaped my pen, I will tell you something of it. Do you know, my friend, that but little is known of this place, of which so much has been said. I can tell you, better than any other person, what it really was, for I, like the Marquise de Pompadour, took upon myself the superintendence of it, and busied myself with what they did there. It was, *entre nous*, the black spot in the reign of Louis XV., and will cost me much pain to describe.

The vices of Louis XV. were the result of bad education. When an infant they gave him for governor the vainest, most foppish, and most stupid of men—the Duc de Villeroi, who had so well served the King (*si bien servi le roi*[1]). Never had courtier so much courtiership as he. He saw the young Prince from morning till night, and from morning till night

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1 The Countess alludes to the *chanson* written on the Duc de Villeroi after his famous defeat:

"Villeroi, Villeroi,
A fort bien servi le roi."

he was incessantly repeating in his ears that his future subjects were born for him, and that they were all dependent on his good and gracious pleasure. Such lessons, daily repeated, necessarily destroyed the wise instructions of Massillon. When grown up, Louis XV. saw the libertinism of Cardinal Dubois and the orgies of the Regency. Madame de Mailli's shameless conduct was before his eyes, and Richelieu's likewise. Louis XV. could not conduct himself differently from his ministers and his family. His timid character was formed upon the example of others. At first he selected his own mistresses, but afterwards he chose someone who took that trouble off his hands. Lebel became purveyor-in-chief to his pleasures, and controlled in Versailles the house known as the Parc-aux-Cerfs.

As soon as the courtiers knew of the existence and purposes of this house they intrigued for the control of it. The King laughed at all their efforts, and left the whole management to Lebel, under the superintendence of the Comte de Saint-Florentin, Minister of the Royal Household. They installed there, however, a sort of military chief, formerly a major of infantry, who was called, jestingly, M. de Cervières. His functions consisted in an active surveillance, and in preventing young men from penetrating the seraglio. The soldiers at the nearest station had orders to obey his first summons. His pay was 12,000 livres a year.

A female styled the *surintendante* had the management of the domestic affairs. She ruled with despotic sway, controlled the expenses, preserved good order, and regulated the amusements of her charges, taking care that they did not mix one with the other. She was an elderly canoness of a noble order, belonging to one of the best families in Burgundy. She was only known at the Parc as *Madame*, and no one ventured to give her any other name. Shortly after the decease of Madame de Pompadour, she had succeeded in this employ a woman of low rank, who had a most astonishing mind. Louis XV. thought very highly of her, and said that if she were a man he would have made her his minister. She had put the harem on an admirable

system, and instructed the *odalisques* in all the necessary etiquette.

The Madame of my time was a woman of noble appearance, tall, ascetic, with a keen eye and imperious manner. She expressed a sovereign contempt of all the low-born beauties confided to her trust. However, she did not treat her wards ill, for some one of them might produce a passion in the heart of the King, and she was determined to be prepared for whatever might fall out. As to the noble ladies, they were her favourites. Madame did not divide her flock into fair and dark, which would have been natural, but into noble and ignoble.

Besides Madame there were two under-mistresses, whose duties consisted in keeping company with the young ladies who were placed there. They sometimes dined with new comers, instructed them in polite behaviour, and aided them in their musical lessons, or in dancing, history and literature, in which these *élèves* were instructed. Then followed a dozen women of lower station, creatures for any service, half waiting-women, half companions, who kept watch over the other ladies, and neglected nothing that could injure each other at every opportunity. The work of the house was performed by proper servants, and male domestics chosen expressly for their age and ugliness. They were highly paid, but in return for the least indiscretion on their part they were sent to linger out their existence in a State prison. A severe watch was kept over every person of either sex in this mysterious establishment. It was requisite, in fact, that an impenetrable veil should be cast over the frailties of the King, and that the public should know nothing of what occurred at the Parc-aux-Cerfs.

The general term *élèves* was applied to the young persons who were kept there. They were of all ages, from nine to eighteen years. Until fifteen they were kept in total ignorance of the city which they inhabited. When they had attained that age no more mystery was made of it; they only endeavoured to prevent them from believing that they were destined for the King's service. Sometimes they

were told they were imprisoned as well as their family; sometimes that a lover rich and powerful kept them concealed to satisfy his love. One thought she belonged to a German prince, another to an English lord. There were some, however, who, better informed, either by their predecessors or by chance, knew precisely what was in store for them, and accordingly built some exceedingly fine castles in the air. But when they were suspected to be so knowing they were sent away, and either married (if pregnant), or compelled to enter a cloister or chapter.

The noble damsels were served with peculiar etiquette: their servants wore a green livery. Those who belonged to the ignobles had their valets clothed only in grey. The King had arranged this, and applauded it as one of the most admirable decisions of his life, and contended with me that the families who paid this impost for his pleasures were greatly indebted to him for it. I assure you, my friend, that there are often very peculiar ideas in the head of a King.

After Madame, the under-mistresses and the young ladies came a lady who had no title in the house, because she "carried on the war" out of doors, but still was a most useful personage. In very truth, La Mère Bompart was a wonderful animal. Paint to yourself a woman rather small than large, rather fat than lean, rather old than young, with a good foot, a good eye, as robust as a trooper, with a decided "call" for intrigue, drinking nothing but wine, telling nothing but lies, swearing by or denying God, as suited her purpose. Fancy such a one, and you will have before you La Mère Bompart, *pourvoyeuse en chef des cellules du Parc-aux-Cerfs.*

She was in correspondence with all sorts of persons, with the most celebrated females termed *appareilleuses*, with the most noted pimps. She treated Lebel as her equal, went familiarly to M. de Sartines, and occasionally condescended to visit M. de Saint-Florentin. Everybody at Court received her graciously—everybody but the King and myself, who held her in equal horror.

The Parc-aux-Cerfs cost enormous sums. The lowest expense was calculated at 150,000 livres, to pay only the functionaries and the domestics, the education and board of the *élèves*, &c. This does not include the cost of the *recruiting service*, the indemnities paid to families, the dowry given with them in marriage, the presents made to them, and the expenses of the illegitimate children. This was enormous in cost, at least 2,000,000 livres a year, and yet I make the lowest estimation. The Parc-aux-Cerfs was kept up for thirty-four years. It cost annually four or five millions livres, and that will amount to nearly 150,000,000 livres (£6,250,000). If you think I am in error, go through the calculation.

A short time after my sojourn at Versailles, when I was the acknowledged mistress of the King, the Duc de Richelieu asked me if I had heard of the Parc-aux-Cerfs? I asked him in my turn what he meant, and if I could procure any account of the place. He then told me of the care which Madame de Pompadour bestowed on the establishment, the advantage she drew from it, and assured me of the necessity for following her example. I spoke of this to Comte Jean, and begged his advice. My brother-in-law replied:

"You must do as the Marquise de Pompadour did, and as the Duc de Richelieu has advised. They spend a vast deal of money in this house, and I undertake to look over their accounts. Nominate me your prime minister, and I shall be the happiest of men. It is impossible but that there must be something to be gleaned from His Majesty."

"In truth, my dear brother-in-law, you would be in your element: money to handle and young girls to manage. What more could you covet? You will establish a gaming-table at the Parc-aux-Cerfs and never quit it again."

Comte Jean began to laugh, and then seriously advised me to follow the plain counsel of the Duc de Richelieu.

I decided on doing so. I sent for Madame. She came with all the dignity of an abbess of a regally founded convent. But in spite of her pretensions, I only saw in her the rival of Gourdan and Paris, and treated her as such, that is, with

some contempt, for with that feeling her office inspired me. She told me all I have described to you, and many other things which have since escaped me. At that time there were only four *élèves* in the house. When she had given me all the details I wished, I sent her away, desiring her to inform me of all that passed in her establishment.

CHAPTER XIX

Fête given by the Comtesse de Valentinois—Madame du Barri feigns an indisposition—Her dress—The Duc de Cossé-Brissac—The Comte and Comtesse de Provence—Dramatic entertainment—Favart and Voisenon—A few observations—A pension—The Maréchale de Luxembourg—Adventure of M. de Bombelles—Copy of a letter addressed to him—Louis XV.—M. de Maupeou and Madame du Barri.

My present situation was not a little embarrassing. Known and recognised as the mistress of the King, it but ill accorded with my feelings to be compelled to add to that title the superintendent of his pleasures; and I had not yet been sufficiently initiated into the intrigues of a Court life to accept this strange charge without manifest dislike and hesitation. Nevertheless, whilst so many were contending for the honour of that which I contemned, I was compelled to stifle my feelings and resign myself to the bad as well as the good afforded by my present situation. At a future period I shall have occasion again to revert to the Parc-aux-Cerfs during the period of my reign, but for the present I wish to change the subject by relating to you what befell me at a fête given me by Madame de Valentinois, while she feigned to give it in honour of Madame de Provence.

The Comtesse de Valentinois, flattered by the kindness of the Dauphiness's manner towards her, and wishing still further to insinuate herself into her favour, imagined she should promote her object by requesting that Princess to do her the honour to pass an evening at her house. Her request was granted, and that, too, before the Duchesse de la Vauguyon could interfere to prevent it. Furious at not having been apprised of the invitation till too late to cause its rejection, she vowed to make the triumphant Countess pay dearly for her triumph. For my own part I troubled myself very little with the success of Madame

de Valentinois, which, in fact, I perceived would rather assist than interfere with my projects. Hitherto I had not made my appearance at any of the houses of the nobility when the Princesses were invited thither; this clearly proved to the public in general how great was the opposition I experienced from the Court party. I was now delighted to prove to the Parisians that I was not always to lead the life of a recluse, but that I could freely present myself at those parties to which other ladies were invited. However, as my friends apprehended that the Comtesse de Provence might prevail upon her lady of honour not to invite me, by the advice of the Chancellor and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, it was arranged that I should for a week previous to the fête feign a severe indisposition. It would be impossible to describe the joy with which these false tidings were received by my enemies. We are all apt to picture things as we would have them, and already the eager imaginations of the opposing party had converted the account of my illness into an incurable and mortal disease. Every hour my friends brought me in fresh anecdotes of the avidity with which the rumour of my dangerous state had been received, whilst I lay upon what the credulous hopes of my enemies had determined should be my death-bed, laughing heartily at their folly and preparing fresh schemes to confound and disappoint their anticipated triumph.

One very important subject for consideration was my dress for the coming occasion. The King presented me with a new set of jewels, and himself selected the materials for my robe and train, which were to be composed of a rich green satin embroidered with gold, trimmed with wreaths of roses and looped up with pearls. The lower part of this magnificent dress was trimmed with a profusion of the finest Flemish lace. I wore on my head a garland of full-blown roses, composed of the finest green and gold work; round my forehead was a string of beautiful pearls, from the centre of which depended a diamond star; add to this a pair of splendid ear-rings, valued at 100,000 crowns, with a variety of jewels equally costly, and you may form some idea of

my appearance on that eventful evening. The King, who presided at my toilette, could not repress his admiration; he even insisted upon fastening my necklace, in order that he might, as he said, flatter himself with having completed such a triumph of nature and art.

At the hour fixed upon I set out, conducted by the Ducs d'Aiguillon and de Cossé-Brissac. And now I remember I introduce the latter to you for the first time; however, I promise that it will not be for the last. He possessed, and still possesses, all the virtues of his noble house; he was impetuous from a deeply feeling heart, and proud from a consciousness of being properly appreciated. Young, handsome and daring, he was pre-eminently calculated both to inspire love and to feel it. It was quite impossible for him to fail in winning the affections of any woman he exerted himself to please; and even at the present time, when he has lost some of his earlier graces, he is still as irresistible as ever. His naturally gay disposition was but ill suited to grave or philosophic reasoning, but then he was the soul of good company, possessing a fine and delicate wit, which vented itself in the most brilliant sallies. M. de Cossé-Brissac, like the knights of old, was wholly devoted to his King and his mistress, and would, I am sure, had occasion required it, have nobly died in defence of either. I only pray he may never be put to the proof. I saw much of him at the beginning of our acquaintance, but as his many amiable qualities became better known I found myself almost continually in his society; indeed, as I have something to confess in the business, I could hardly choose a better opportunity than the present, did I not recollect that the good Duc d'Aiguillon is waiting all this while for me to announce the *entrée* of our party into the ante-room of Madame de Valentinois.

My entrance was a complete *coup de théâtre*. I had been imagined languishing on the bed of sickness, yet there I stood in all the fulness of health and freshness of beauty. I could very easily read upon each countenance the vexation and rage my appearance of entire freedom from all ailment

excited. However, I proceeded without delay to the mistress of the house, whom I found busily engaged in seating her visitors and playing the amiable to the Dauphiness. This Princess seemed equally astonished at my unexpected apparition; nevertheless, taken off her guard, she could not prevent herself from courteously returning the profound salutation I made her. As for the Duchesse de la Vauguyon, when she saw me she turned alternately from red to white, and was even weak enough to give public vent to her fury. The Comte de Provence, who had been told that I was not expected, began to laugh when he perceived me, and, taking the first opportunity of approaching me, he said, "Ah, madam! so you, too, can mystify your friends, I see! Take care; the sight of charms like yours is sufficient to strike terror into any adversaries, without having recourse to any expedient to heighten their effect." Saying this, he passed on without giving me the opportunity of replying, as I wished to do.

The Maréchale de Mirepoix, to whom I had confided my secret, and of whose fidelity I was assured, was present at the fête. I availed myself of the offer of a seat near her, and directly we were seated she said, "You are a clever creature, for you have completely bewildered all the female part of this evening's society, and, by way of a finishing stroke, will run away with the hearts of all the flutterers here before the fair ladies they were previously hovering around have recovered from their first astonishment."

"Upon my word," said I, smiling, "I do not wonder at the kind looks with which the ladies favour me, if my presence is capable of producing so much mischief."

"Pray, my dear," answered the Maréchale, "be under no mistake; you might be as much beloved as others are if you did not monopolise the King's affections. The consequence is that every woman with even a passable face looks upon you as the usurper of her right; and as the fickle gentlemen who woo these gentle ladies are all ready to transfer their homage to you directly you appear, you must admit that your presence is calculated to produce no inconsiderable degree of confusion."

The commencement of a play which formed part of the evening's entertainment obliged us to cease further conversation.

The first piece represented was *Rose et Colas*, a charming pastoral, to which the music of Monsigny gave a fresh charm. The actors were selected from among the best of the Comédie Italienne—the divine Clairval and the fascinating Mademoiselle Caroline. I was so completely enchanted whilst the play lasted that I forgot both my cabals and recent triumph, and for awhile believed myself actually transported to the rural scenes it represented, surrounded by the honest villagers so well depicted. But this delightful vision soon passed away, and soon, too soon, I awoke from it to find myself surrounded by my *excellent* friends at Court.

Rose et Colas was followed by a species of comedy mixed with songs. This piece was wholly in honour of the Dauphiness, with the exception of some flattering and gallant allusions to myself and some gross compliments to my cousin the Chancellor, who, in new silk robe and a fine powdered wig, was also present at this fête.

The performers in this little piece, who were Favart the actor and Voisenon the priest, must have been fully satisfied with the reception they obtained, for the comedy was applauded as though it had been one of the *chefs d'œuvre* of Voltaire. In general a private audience is very indulgent so long as the representation lasts, but no sooner has the curtain fallen than they indulge in a greater severity of criticism than a public audience would do. And so it happened on the evening in question. One verse had particularly excited the discontent of all the spectators, male and female. I know not what prophetic spirit inspired the following lines:

"Malgré la discorde et ses noirs émissaires
De la justice aidera le flambeau,
A la chicane on rognera les ailles
Et Thémis sera sans bandeau." [1]

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1 We give these lines verbatim from the manuscript of Madame du Barri, whose ear, in all probability, did not detect their false measure.

These unfortunate lines were productive of much offence against the husband and lover of Madame Favart, for the greater part of the persons present perfectly detested my poor cousin, who was "to clip the wings of chicanery." Favart managed to escape just in time, and the Abbé de Voisenon, who was already not in very high favour with his judges, was compelled to endure the full weight of their complaints and reproaches. Every voice was against him, and even his brethren of the French Academy, departing from their accustomed indulgence upon such matters, openly reprimanded him for the grossness of his flattery. The poor Abbé attempted to justify himself by protesting that he knew nothing of the hateful lines, and that Favart alone was the guilty person upon whom they should expend their anger.

"I am always," cried he, "doomed to suffer for the offences of others; every kind of folly is made a present to me."

"Have a care, M. l'Abbé," exclaimed D'Alembert, who was among the guests; "have a care! Men seldom lavish their gifts but upon those who are rich enough to return the original present in a tenfold degree." This somewhat sarcastic remark was most favourably received by all who heard it, and quickly circulated through the room, while the poor, oppressed Abbé remained, with vehement action—

> "Jurant, mais un peu tard,
> Qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus."

The fête in itself was most splendidly and tastefully conducted, and might have sent the different visitors home pleased and gratified in an eminent degree, had not spite and ill-nature suggested to Madame de la Vauguyon that, as the Chancellor and myself were present, it must necessarily have been given with a view of complimenting us rather than Madame de Provence. She even sought to irritate the Dauphiness by insinuating the same mean and contemptible motive, and so far did she succeed that,

when Madame de Valentinois approached to express her hopes that the entertainment which she had honoured with her presence had been to Her Royal Highness's satisfaction, the Dauphiness coolly replied, "Do not, madam, affect to style this evening's fête one bestowed in honour of myself or any part of my family. It is true we have been the ostensible causes, and have, by our presence, given it all the effect you desired, but you will pardon our omitting to thank you for an attention which was in reality directed to the Comtesse du Barri and M. de Maupeou."

Madame de Valentinois came to me with tears in her eyes to repeat the cruel remark of the Princess. The Maréchale de Mirepoix, who heard her, sought to console her by assurances that it would in no degree affect her interest at Court. "Never mind, my good friend," said she; "the pretty bird merely warbles the notes it learns from its keeper, La Vauguyon, and will as quickly forget as learn them. Nevertheless, the King owes you a recompense for the vexation it has occasioned you."

As soon as I found myself alone with the Maréchale I enquired of her what was the nature of the reparation she considered Madame de Valentinois entitled to expect from the hands of His Majesty. She replied, "It is on your account alone that the poor Countess has received her late mortification, and the King is therefore bound to atone for it in the form of a pension. Money, my dear; money is a sovereign cure at Court—calms every grief and heals every wound."

I fully agreed with the good-natured Maréchale; and when I bade the sorrowful Madame de Valentinois good night, I assured her I would implore His Majesty to repair the mischief my presence had caused. Accordingly, on the following day, when the King questioned me as to how far I had been amused with the fête given by Madame de Valentinois, I availed myself of the opening to state my entire satisfaction, as well as to relate the disgrace into which she had fallen, and to pray of His Majesty to bestow upon her a pension of 15,000 livres.

"Upon my word," exclaimed Louis XV., hastily tra-

versing the chamber, "this fête seems likely to prove a costly one to me."

"Nay, Sire," said I, "it was a most delightful evening, and you will not, I hope, refuse me such a trifle for those who lavished so much on my amusement."

"Well," cried he, "be it so; the Countess shall have the sum she requires, but upon condition that she does not apply to me again."

"Really, Your Majesty talks," replied I, "as though this trifling pension were to be drawn from your own privy purse."

The King began to smile at my remark, like a man who knows himself found out. I knew him well enough to be certain that, had he intended the pension awarded Madame de Valentinois to come from his own privy purse, he would scarcely have consented to bestowing on her more than a shabby pittance of a thousand livres per annum. It is scarcely possible to conceive an idea of the excessive economy of this Prince. I remember that upon some great occasion, when it was requisite to support the failing public treasury by a timely contribution, the Duc de Choiseul offered the loan of 250,000 livres, whilst the King, to the astonishment of all who heard him, confined his aid to 2,000 louis! The Maréchale de Mirepoix used to assert that Louis XV. was the only Prince of his line who ever knew the value of a crown piece. She had, nevertheless, managed to receive many from him, although I must own that she had had no small difficulty in obtaining them; nor did the King part with his beloved gold without many a sigh of regret.

At the house of Madame de Valentinois I met the Maréchale de Luxembourg, who had recently returned from Chanteloup. There really was something of infatuation in the general mania which seemed to prevail of treating the King's sentiments with indifference, and considering his displeasure as an affair of no consequence. Before the disgrace of the Choiseuls they were equally the objects of Madame de Luxembourg's most bitter hatred, nor was Madame de Grammont backward in returning her animosity.

Yet, strange as it may seem, no sooner was the Choiseul party exiled than the Maréchale never rested till she saw her name engraved on the famous pillar erected to perpetuate the remembrance of all those who had visited the exiles. She employed their mutual friends to effect a reconciliation, which was at length effected by letter, and a friendly embrace exchanged by proxy. These preliminaries over, the Maréchale came to the King to make the request to which he had now become accustomed, but which did not the less amuse him. Of course Louis XV. made no hesitation in granting her the request she solicited. Speaking to me of the subject, he said, "The *tender* meeting of Madame de Grammont and the Maréchale de Luxembourg must indeed be an overpowering sight. I only trust these two ladies may not drop the mask too soon, and bite each other's ear while they are embracing."

Madame de Luxembourg, daughter of the Duc de Villeroi, had been first married to the Duc de Boufflers, whose brows she helped to adorn with other ornaments than the ducal coronet; nor whilst her youth and beauty lasted was she less generous to her second husband. She was generally considered a most fascinating woman, from the loveliness of her person and the vivacity of her manners; but behind an ever-ready wit lurked the most implacable malice and hatred against all who crossed her path or purpose. As she advanced in life she became more guarded and circumspect, until at last she set herself up as the arbitress of high life, and the youthful part of the nobility crowded around her to hear the lessons of her past experience. By the number and power of her pupils she could command both the Court and city. Her censures were dreaded because pronounced in language so strong and severe as to fill those who incurred them with no hope of ever shining in public opinion whilst so formidable a veto was uttered against them; and her decrees, from which there was no appeal, either stamped a man with dishonour or introduced him as a candidate of the first class for universal admiration and esteem; and her hatred was as

much dreaded as ever her smiles had been courted. For my own part, I always felt afraid of her, and never willingly found myself in her presence.

After I had obtained for Madame de Valentinois the boon I solicited, I was conversing with the King respecting Madame de Luxembourg, when the Chancellor entered the room. He came to relate to His Majesty an affair which had occasioned various reports and much scandal. The Viscount de Bombelles, an officer in a hussar regiment, had married a Mademoiselle Camp; but for reasons unnecessary for me to seek to discover, he was induced all at once to annul his marriage, and, profiting by a regulation which forbade all good Catholics from intermarrying with those of the Reformed religion, he demanded the dissolution of his union with Mademoiselle Camp. This attempt on his part to violate upon such grounds the sanctity of the nuptial vow, whilst it was calculated to rekindle the spirit of religious persecution, was productive of very unfavourable consequences to the character of M. de Bombelles. The general cry was against him; he stood alone and unsupported in the contest, for even the greatest bigots themselves would not intermeddle or appear to applaud a matter which attacked both honour and good feeling. The comrades of M. de Bombelles refused to associate with him; but the finishing stroke came from his old companions at the military school where he had been brought up. On the 27th of November, 1771, the council of this establishment wrote him the following letter:

"The military school have perused with equal indignation and grief the memorials which have appeared respecting you in the public prints. Had you not been educated in this establishment we should merely have looked upon your affair with Mademoiselle Camp as a scene too distressing for humanity, and it would have been buried in our peaceful walls beneath the veil of modesty and silence; but we owe it to the youth sent to us by His Majesty for the inculcation of those principles which become as well the soldier as the man, not to pass over the present opportunity of inspiring them with a just horror of your misguided conduct, as well as feeling it an imperative duty to ourselves not to appear indifferent to the scandal and disgraceful confusion your proceedings have occasioned in the capital. We leave to the ministers of our religion and the magistrates who are appointed to guard our laws to decide upon the legality of the bonds

between yourself and Mademoiselle Camp, but by one tribunal you are distinctly pronounced guilty towards her, and that is the tribunal of honour. Before that tribunal which exists in the heart of every good man you have been universally cited and condemned. There are some errors which all the impetuosity of youth is unable to excuse, and yours are unhappily of that sort. The different persons composing this establishment, therefore, concur not only in praying of us to signify their sentiments, but likewise to apprise you that you are unanimously forbidden from appearing within these walls again."

The Chancellor brought to the King a copy of this severe letter, to which I listened with much emotion. Nor did the King seem more calm than myself.

"This is, indeed," said he at length, "a very sad affair. We shall have all the quarrels of Protestantism renewed, as if I had not already had enough of those of the Jansenists and Jesuits! As far as I can judge, M. de Bombelles is entitled to the relief he seeks, and every marriage contracted with a Protestant is null and void by the laws of France."

"Oh, Sire," I cried, "would I had married a Protestant!"

The King smiled for a moment at my jest, then resumed:

"I blame the military school."

"Is it your Majesty's pleasure," enquired the Chancellor, "that I should signify your displeasure to them?"

"No, sir," replied Louis, "it does not come within your line of duty, and devolves rather upon the Minister of War, and very possibly he would object to executing such a commission; for how could I step forward as the protector of one who would shake off the moral obligation of an oath directly it suits his inclinations to doubt its legality? This affair gives me great uneasiness, and involves the most serious consequences. You will see that I shall be overwhelmed with petitions and pamphlets, demanding of me the re-institution of the Edict of Nantes."

"And what, Sire," asked the Chancellor, gravely, "could you do that would better consolidate the glory of your reign?"

"Chancellor!" exclaimed Louis XV., stepping back with unfeigned astonishment, "have you lost your senses? What would the clergy say or do? The very thought makes me shudder. Do you then believe, M. de Maupeou, that the race

of the Cléments, the Ravaillacs, the Damiens, are extinct in France?"

"Ah, Sire, what needless fears!"

"Not so needless as you may deem them," answered the King. "I have been caught once; I am not going to expose myself to danger a second time. You know the proverb—no, no, let us leave things as my predecessors left them. Besides, I shall not be sorry to leave a little employment for my successor; he may get through it how he can. In spite of all the clamouring of the philosophers, the present order of things shall not be interfered with while I live. I will have neither civil nor religious war, but live in peace, and eat my supper with a good appetite, with you, my fair Countess, for my constant guest, and you, M. de Maupeou, for this evenings' visitor."

The conversation here terminated.

CHAPTER XX

Arrival of the Comte du Barri—M. de Sartines—Interview of Madame du Barri with her husband—Conversation with the Maréchale de Mirepoix—A projected divorce—Linguet the advocate—A consultation—Cardinal de Bernis—Madame du Barri's letter to this prelate—His reply—Advice of the Maréchale de Mirepoix—The Abbé Terray seeks to introduce his daughter as a mistress to the King—Dispute—Various scenes.

After so much conversation respecting the affairs of others, permit me, my friend, to speak to you a little of my own. One fine morning my sister-in-law Chon came into my chamber with a grave and solemn air.

"My brother has arrived," she said.

"Well," I replied, "let him come in."

"My dear sister," she said, "I am not speaking of Comte Jean."

"Of whom, then, can you be speaking?" I cried.

"Of Comte Guillaume, your husband."

"Heaven defend me!" I exclaimed. "What brings him to Paris without my knowledge or consent? It is a great presumption on his part. Did we not mutually agree that he should remain at Toulouse?"

"It appears," replied Chon, "that he has had some disagreement there, and having espoused the part of the old magistracy, he has come hither to see and to speak with you on the subject."

"All that I can do for him," I said, "is to obtain a *lettre de cachet* as quickly as possible from the Duc de la Vrillière, so as to shelter him that way from the anger of the Chancellor."

Chon, who easily perceived that I spoke jestingly, began to assure me how greatly her brothers, as well as herself,

regretted the unexpected arrival of Comte Guillaume. She entreated of me not to refuse him the short interview he was desirous of obtaining; and with my natural good-nature I promised to see him the first time I went to Paris. The truth was, I felt some little curiosity to converse with my husband, for, excepting the responses made by him during the nuptial ceremony, the very sound of his voice was unknown to me.

In the course of the day I received a visit from M. de Sartines. His attire bespoke the uncommon pains he had taken with it, and his wig was curled and powdered with more than ordinary care. His air of bustling intelligence amused me greatly, and still further was I entertained when, with all the mysterious gravity of a Lieutenant of Police, he half whispered:

"Madam, I bring you sad news: your husband is arrived!!!"

"Bad news, my good sir, how can that be? Comte du Barri has neither beaten me nor turned me from his door."

"He has taken up his abode," continued the important M. de Sartines, almost bursting with the weight of his communication, "at the house of M. de Selle, Treasurer of the Navy."

"I am sure it gives me great pleasure to think he is so respectably accommodated. It is more than his brother Comte Jean would ever have thought of doing."

"He has with him," added M. de Sartines, "a young female, who passes for his mistress."

"Speak out, my worthy sir," I cried; "say who *is* his mistress; fear not to displease me. Comte Guillaume has not vowed a life of celibacy."

The Lieutenant of Police regarded me with an air of astonishment, and then observed:

"I see, madam, that the arrival of M. du Barri does not give you much disquiet."

"Most assuredly not," I answered.

"Ah, madam, you do not reflect how the Parisians will

triumph, or with what a torrent of pasquinades, couplets and caricatures they will overwhelm us."

"It is your province to prevent that," I said, quickly. "To me the matter appears trifling enough, and in a very short time the jest will fail to procure a smile from those who may at first appear most diverted by it. But come, M. de Sartines—you who know everything—tell me, is this mistress of Comte Guillaume's thought pretty?"

"I am told she is charming."

"Well," I said, glancing at an opposite mirror, "so much the better; the poor man has at least some recompense for what he has lost."

So saying, I dismissed M. de Sartines, assuring him that the affair was in no way unpleasant to me, and that I considered the arrival of the Comte du Barri as but adding one more to the list of *husbands* already in Paris. To own the truth, I did not view it as lightly as I feigned to do, but by seeming indifferent to my husband's visit to Paris, I sought to persuade myself I was in reality so.

It was not long ere Comte Jean arrived, furious at his brother's folly, and execrating his madness in visiting the capital, merely, as he said, to spend the last louis he could obtain from us.

"And how long," I enquired, "have you been so thoughtful and economical with regard to money matters? But warn your brother from me, that I forbid his appearing at Versailles under any pretext whatsoever."

I afterwards took Chon apart and gave her a thousand louis for her brother Comte Guillaume, requesting she would forward them without the cognisance of Comte Jean, who, had he been aware of the transaction, would soon have converted them to his own use. My husband thanked me by letter, in which he further prayed my forgiveness for his visit to Paris. I replied by the following note:

"SIR,—I have never wished to control your actions, and only recommend you to be reasonable in all you say and do; you will find your own interest in it. We should have a mutual feeling of indulgence towards each other. All I wish is to live in peace. Be assured that I shall be most happy to oblige you in all things which may lay in my power."

I allowed several days to pass before I visited Paris. At length I went thither under pretext of calling upon the Maréchale de Mirepoix. I took Chon with me, in order that she might go and forewarn her brother of my being ready to receive him. He must have had some previous intimation of my coming, for he presented himself at my door nearly as soon as we had quitted the carriage. He looked greatly embarrassed. I held out my hand to him.

"I trust you are well, sir," I said. "I am happy to see you. I presume you were weary of Toulouse?"

"You are right, madam," he replied, bowing. "Toulouse is a sad, gloomy place; besides, I had an ardent desire to pay my respects to you."

"I thank you, sir," I said. "Our interviews have been tolerably rare until now; I only pray they may continue to be so."

"Ah! madam, it is that which distresses me. Could I but hope——"

"I beg your pardon, sir," I interrupted; "how is your mistress?"

Comte Guillaume stopped short in his speech, but after a moment's hesitation he replied, with every appearance of confusion, "Quite well, I thank you, madam."

"I am delighted to hear it. I understand she is very handsome."

"Far less so than you, madam."

"A truce to these idle compliments, M. le Comte," I cried; "it was not to listen to them I came hither. Let us behave more honestly to each other, and speak with candour."

"Willingly, madam. I am entirely of your opinion."

"Listen to me, M. le Comte. When we were married we were all but entire strangers to each other. You did not espouse me for my beauty, neither did I bestow my hand upon you for the pleasure of being your wife. I wanted a name, you wanted a fortune; each of us obtained the object we were in need of. I am fully satisfied with my bargain; are you not content with yours?"

"No, madam, I consider myself shamefully treated. My elder brother keeps everything in his own hands."

"My good sir," I said, "Comte Jean, although a Parliamentarian, is the greatest feudalist in the world, and will not easily lay aside his right of seniority. But it is my wish that you should have an honourable subsistence; I will therefore cause your pension to be so far augmented that both yourself and your fair companion cannot fail of being satisfied."

My husband thanked me again and again for my goodness. I wished to put an end to the scene, and therefore rang for Chon, who entered, and led away Comte Guillaume, whom I never again beheld. My noble husband little dreamed that at that very moment I was endeavouring to procure an edict from Rome for the dissolution of my marriage. I had formed great projects, or, perhaps, to speak more correctly, they had been formed for me. That Marquise de Maintenon I could not get out of my head. As soon as Comte Guillaume had quitted me I hastened to the house of the Maréchale.

"My dear soul!" said she, embracing me, "what is the matter with you? you appear quite agitated. What has happened?"

"Nothing," I said, attempting to smile, "things go on much as usual, neither better nor worse; but what troubles me a little is that I have just seen my husband."

"My dear, you astonish me. And what are you going to do about it? What in heaven's name does the man want in this part of the world?" asked the Maréchale, all of a breath.

"He comes to see Paris," I replied, laconically.

"Well, let him see it," she said, "and then let him go. His presence seems to have quite moved you. Have a care, my sweet Countess; it would be foolish in you to act as sometimes is the case, and fall in love with your own husband."

"No, no," I exclaimed, "there is no fear of that on either side; I have too much to think of, and he is accompanied by a lovely young creature."

"That's right," answered the Maréchale; "just as it should be. Ah, I see Comte du Barri is a well-bred man,

who knows the world too well to annoy his wife. Nevertheless, I recommend you to hurry his departure from hence as much as possible. Situated as you are a husband cannot be too far off. M. de Montespan acted the wisest part."

I could not but assent to the justness of the good Maréchale's reasoning, and I promised to follow her advice.

I have already hinted at my intention of dissolving my marriage, a measure to which I was strongly urged by everyone around me, excepting, indeed, those belonging to my husband's family. It was flattery, certainly, although none could have been more palatable than the continual assertion of those who sought to profit by my credulity, that my husband was the only obstacle to my sharing the throne of Louis XV. The Chancellor was one of the first to put this absurd idea into my head. He was doing his utmost, he said, to lead the King's mind to the favourable contemplation of such a measure; and both the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Abbé Terray, sporting with my vanity, assured me that the thing was quite practicable. For my own part, it seemed too much of a jest to elevate the frail mistress of Nicolas Mathon to the dignity of Queen of the Empire of France, and I even smiled at the absurdity of fancying myself the grandmother of the Dauphin, and, as such, compelling even the Dauphiness to bow the knee of respect and duty.

The three counsellors I have just mentioned were not the only ones who assisted me by their advice in this momentous affair. Madame de Monaco, whose birth was the only superiority she possessed over myself, warmly encouraged me in my ambitious projects. Interest, however, was the cause of this lady's energetic attempts to hurry forward my schemes of fortune; and as her own views were directed to forming a marriage with the Prince de Condé, she was very anxious that the King should, by his union with me, afford her a precedent upon which to raise her own matrimonial greatness. With a view to accelerate the business, she introduced to me an advocate, named Linguet, who at that period bore a high reputation, which, indeed, he still lives to enjoy.

M. Linguet was the very *beau-idéal* of a pettifogger. Impudent, noisy, and but seldom detected in an observance of truth; tolerably witty, yet prolix and loquacious, he wearied his hearers with his oratorical rhapsodies, whilst he bewildered himself with his own tropes and figures. For ever dwelling upon the virtues of honour and integrity, he yet in his heart disbelieved in the existence of either; and, although possessed of the most overreaching greediness, was continually boasting of his disinterested motives in all he undertook. The public in general believed him possessed of much talent, but, like a drum, the excessive noise and bustle he made arose only from the emptiness of his brain.

When I first saw M. Linguet, I confess I was as much deceived as others. He called on me, and the high price at which he estimated his services impressed me with the idea that they must be highly advantageous to secure. He traced out a plan of conduct for me; but it was necessary, in the first place, to examine the state of things by submitting to the public a case analogous to mine, which by interesting only persons of the lower class would have no tendency to excite political opposition. The point aimed at was to procure a legal decision upon it.

In order to accomplish this, M. Linguet published the following case. I copy it for you, under the idea that, although it was published, it might have escaped your notice, besides, it has some relation to what I shall hereafter have to tell you.

"Simon Sommer, a carpenter at Landau, was married in May, 1761, to Elizabeth Uttine, a native of the village of Obersbach, but scarcely had she become his wife than she evinced a spirit of intrigue, which ultimately led her into the most scandalous excesses, until at length she attached herself to a sergeant in a Swiss regiment, with whom she eloped. The guilty pair sought refuge in Prussia, where they settled themselves, and even had the hardihood to contract a marriage with each other. When this occurred, Sommer had just completed his thirty-first year. The case of this unfortunate father (for his wretched wife left him one helpless child) calls

for sincere commiseration as well as deep consideration—is he to be doomed to a life of misery? Deprived of the society and comfort of a wife, must he be left to curse his existence, or to seek to drown in profligate and guilty pleasures his sense of wrong and shame? Placed between crime and despair, how is he to escape from this cruel alternative?"

After this detail of facts, M. Linguet went more deeply into the subject; and, after treating it in a very learned manner, he proceeded to establish the necessity of a divorce. This memorial was not destitute of good reasoning; it caused considerable sensation, from the circumstance of some ill-natured persons suggesting that all this stir was never made merely to relieve an obscure carpenter; and the first idea upon the subject was quickly followed by the whole truth of the matter.

Whilst these steps were progressively paving the way at home for my divorce, I was equally anxious to have some efficient agent sent for that purpose to the Court of Rome.

"The man suited for this embassy," said the Chancellor, "should be one as devoid of virtue as consistency—a fellow whom we might altogether disown if occasion required it. But to succeed in his mission, this man should be both a profligate and an *intrigant*, as clever as cunning."

"And where, my good cousin," I cried, "am I to find such a person? I know of no one within the circle of my acquaintance so highly gifted, unless, indeed, I were to select one of our prelates as my ambassador to the Holy See."

"I have precisely the description of messenger you stand in need of," replied the Chancellor. "I am sure of my man, who is a Provençal abbé—one of the very worst of the ecclesiastical profession, and that is saying no trifle. He is witty, lively, eager for advancement and covetous of money; promise him a bishopric and he will stop at nothing. Rather than miss the reward, I will engage that he will turn the very stones of Rome upside down."

This abbé was quickly engaged for my service. I will not now give his name because he has attained to great

eminence and has become a prince of the Church; but you will easily guess who I mean when I tell you he was the nephew of the canoness you visited, in 1780, in the isle of St. Louis. Although he did not succeed, I could not suffer his zeal to pass unrewarded, and he owes to me his fortune. He had to struggle against a very powerful party, and before he had been enabled to obtain any decided advantage over them, I had given up my project of dissolving my marriage. Meanwhile my ambassador quitted Paris for Rome, furnished with a letter of credit for Cardinal de Bernis, who represented the King of France with the Holy Father.

This Cardinal de Bernis had been very handsome, and consequently very gay, in his early youth. He possessed a larger stock of wit than riches; yet he, trusting to his reputation, formed as many ambitious schemes as though he had had a large fortune. He came to Paris, but his verses had the misfortune to displease the Bishop de Mirepoix, Minister of Church Benefices, who refused him a living, adding, coarsely:

"I will take care to prevent your obtaining a benefice so long as I remain in office."

"My lord," answered De Bernis, bowing, "I can wait."

This happy retort made the fortune of the Languedocian abbé; he became the friend of Madame de Pompadour, and, shortly after, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Yet, in spite of the excessive notice bestowed by the Marquise de Pompadour on her *protégé*, he possessed in reality a very slender stock of diplomatic talent, and was much more prone to *derange* than *arrange* the matters entrusted to him. As his incompetency became more manifest, it was found necessary to dismiss him; and this was done by bestowing on him a cardinal's hat, and despatching him as ambassador to Rome, where his pleasing manners, immense fortune and want of ability rendered him a great favourite at the Pontifical Court, which flattered his vanity by a great display of respect and consideration, readily mistaken by the credulous abbé for marks of personal regard and interest. He is

now an excellent man, who has abjured all worldly vanities, writing no more verses, and merely reading by stealth those he formerly composed. He has carried with him into exile those pretensions to the Ministry his past experience should have taught him to lay aside.

The King entertained a very indifferent opinion of M. de Bernis, whom he ridiculed upon every occasion, and delighted in calling him by the appellation bestowed on him by M. de Voltaire of "Babet la Bouquetière." Louis XV. even accused him of having in a manner constrained him to declare war against Frederick, solely because, in some verses published by that Prince, he says:

"Evitez de Bernis la stérile abondance."

But I am wandering sadly from the thread of my narrative. My letter to the Cardinal ran as follows:

"My Lord,—I beg to recommend to your Eminence the Abbé de ——, who visits Rome upon business of the first importance to me. The truth is, I have many qualms of conscience respecting my marriage, and would fain loose those bonds I cannot attempt to justify. Your Eminence may greatly aid me in this matter. To say that on the success of this undertaking the future happiness of my life will in a great measure depend is to assure you of the gratitude I shall feel for those who may kindly aid me with their power and interest.

"You are much spoken of at Versailles, and, since your rival has quitted it, are deeply and openly regretted. When will you resume that office to which your talents and my best wishes so earnestly summon you?

"Ever, my lord, yours," &c.

M. de Bernis, upon receipt of my letter, easily perceived at what I was aiming; and fearing to meddle with an affair which might place him on bad terms with the Dauphin, he wrote me the following truly Jesuitical letter:

"Madame la Comtesse, — With the deepest humility I have perused the proof of that confidence you have deigned to repose in me: it leaves me room to hope that the Graces have not forgotten the incense I once burnt on their altars. Be assured that my most ardent desire is to serve you, and that my best exertions shall be employed to forward your wishes; but permit me to add that the happiness of having been enabled to contribute to the success of your negotiation is the only reward I can accept. I have outlived the vanities and temptations of this world, and renounce its empty grandeurs. The fall of M. de Choiseul has taught me full well how little dependence is to be placed on the favour of princes.

"I have seen your friend, the Abbé de ——, and admire him as an ornament to his profession. Your interests cannot be in better hands. He shall have all the benefit of my experience. But let me entreat you, madam, in the name of heaven, not to press the matter with that excessive zeal and activity, which we style here *la furia Francese*, and which is so peculiarly the attribute of your sex. Have but the necessary patience, and I have no doubt of success.

"I have the honour to remain," &c.

I fancied, upon perusing this letter, that my object was already effected, and my success perfectly sure. But my Court education was yet incomplete. Madame de Mirepoix took upon herself the office of putting the finishing stroke to it. We were sitting together after dinner; she had been relating to me a number of stories; all at once she stopped.

"I have a great mind," she said, "to scold you. You are committing a great indiscretion; whether by your own advice or that of others, I know not, but, depend upon it, it will tend to your prejudice, and not a little assist the schemes of your enemies."

I readily divined what the Maréchale alluded to, and I replied, with some confusion:

"I do not see anything very ridiculous in seeking to dissolve a marriage."

"Ridiculous is not the word," exclaimed the Maréchale; "you should say *useless*. You cannot reach the aim you propose; and shall I tell you why? Because those very persons who put the whim into your head would never endure the thoughts of your carrying it into execution."

"Are you, then, in possession of any fresh information on the subject?"

"None whatever, my dear soul, I assure you; but it is never wrong at Court to suspect the worst. The Abbé Terray is playing you false, I am perfectly sure. I do not believe too implicitly in the good faith of your cousin, the Chancellor; and as for the Cardinal, learn that he has been consulting the Abbé de Vermont as to which will be his safest path in the course of your affair."

The Maréchale stopped here, but she might have gone on talking for hours without my interrupting her. At last my

anger found vent in a torrent of words and expressions ill suited to the lips of a courtly dame who believed herself on the very eve of becoming a Queen.

"What an unprincipled set are all those gentlemen of the long robe!" I cried. "The magistrates are no better, and the clergy are regular impostors. There is more safety in the middle of a wood than at Versailles."

I will not weary you by a repetition of the many silly things my disappointed feelings urged me to say and do; neither will I hold myself up to your ridicule by detailing a scene which terminated by my bursting into tears and weeping like an infant.

Whilst my tears were falling fast, the Maréchale exclaimed:

"Come, come, leave off all these childish ways. The more frequently I see you the more I admire you. You are the most candid and ingenuous creature breathing, and really do not yet understand the nature of the country in which you reside."

"Yes, yes," I said, "I do. I know it for an abominable place—a perfect den of cut-throats!"

"Ah, now you are in a rage," cried the Maréchale, very composedly taking a pinch of snuff. "I like to see you in these fits; they so greatly set off your usual beauty. But to return to the subject we were discussing. I repeat that M. de Bernis has been seeking advice touching your affair; and what can be more natural? A cardinal should not bestow his Sovereign in marriage without the consent of the whole Court. I will give you one other piece of intelligence. The Comptroller-General will seek to interrupt your success by every means in his power, simply because he wishes to put Madame Dumerval in your place?"

"Madame Dumerval, his own daughter?"

"Even so; and you must confess there is nothing so very improbable in the fact."

"But," I exclaimed, "to sell his child! and he an abbé! Well, be it so; let her come, she will soon find me more than a match for her."

"My dear creature," replied the Maréchale, "I pray of you to be calm and listen to me. Were I in your place I should abandon all idea of so difficult a divorce and so impracticable a marriage. Not even one of your friends, as you style them, without excepting M. d'Aiguillon, would permit you to wed the King. I will tell you wherefore another time. Have more sense; and, if you must have a fresh husband, choose him in the form of good estates and large revenues, and when the King dies, gold—that grand panacea—will enable you to bear the affliction, and will most effectually console you for all past mortifications and troubles."

I permitted the Maréchale to proceed uninterruptedly, for I could not deny that she had spoken sensibly and well, although I was too much out of humour to admit it at the time. By degrees my angry feelings began to subside, and I was enabled to listen with more composure to my kind friend and adviser whilst she pointed out the folly and extravagance of my pretensions to a share in the throne. She continued to argue so clearly and rationally that I really felt ashamed of my past weakness in having ever aspired to it, and promised to abandon so wild a scheme. But ambition had taken a deeper hold of me than I believed, and I found myself frequently recurring to this my favourite idea. It seemed hard to resign all hopes of ever wearing a crown I imagined would so well have become my brows; and I even fancied I should have been satisfied might I but have worn it in private.

The moment the Maréchale quitted me I snatched up a pen and proceeded to address Cardinal de Bernis. I might here give you a verbatim copy of my letter, but I will not, for it contained only the most indignant reproaches for the duplicity practised by the worthy prelate. The arrival of this angry epistle put "Babet la Bouquetière" into the most terrible alarm, and, trembling for the consequences he had thus provoked, he wrote four long pages of the most servile and cringing flattery, by which he sought to avert the coming storm. The only revenge I took was to throw his letter into the fire.

I next related what I had heard from the Maréchale to the Duc d'Aiguillon. He replied, "Madame de Mirepoix is quite right. The Royal Family are apprised of your intentions, and the Dauphin has been speaking to me respecting them this morning. Do not question me as to the terms in which they mention you; you may easily imagine all they would say. I am, however, charged to desire you will lay aside your measures for procuring a divorce, under penalty of incurring their eternal displeasure. There are some hidden agents industriously employed in irritating the whole Royal party against you. I therefore entreat of you, my lovely friend, to be perfectly quiet in the affair." Notwithstanding the advice of the Duc d'Aiguillon, I could not preserve the prudent silence he dictated towards the Abbé Terray, whose sincerity I had long had reason to suspect, in spite of the increased and studied attentions he showed me. The daughter he sought to introduce to the King was the child of his mistress, Madame de Clerée, and married to a man who well deserved the aversion she entertained for him. I should never of myself have suspected such perfidious conduct on the part of the Abbé had not the Maréchale, with her experience and ample knowledge of the intrigues of Court, discovered his plans and given me timely intimation of what was going on. As the Abbé did not present himself at my house as quickly as I could have desired, I despatched the following note to him:

"MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ,—I wish to speak with you as early as possible upon matters of the most serious nature, and I request that you will lay aside both your public and private occupations for the purpose of calling upon me. You can easily resume them after we have come to an explanation, for an explanation I am resolved to have. It is necessary that each of us should be satisfied—and woe to the one whose perfidy and treachery shall be proved.—Your friend or foe, as circumstances will admit.

"THE COMTESSE DU BARRI."

The guilty Abbé, who easily perceived by the tone of my letter that I was partly acquainted with his plans, began to fear that the whole of them were known to me; and I am certain that to anyone who could have extricated him from his dilemma he would willingly have given a handsome

sum from the public coffers, or even from his own beloved wealth. His terrified ambition painted things in their worst light, and he put off his visit, as though he sought by that means to defer the hour when he should be expelled the Ministry; yet, seeing by my letter how peremptory and immediate was the summons, he could not refuse to attend, and at length he came.

The Abbé Terray had never been good-looking, even in his best days, but upon the present occasion, when he appeared before me with a pallid and distorted countenance, there was something almost fiendish in his aspect. He endeavoured, however, to affect a coolness he was far from feeling, and advancing with a ceremonious air, sought to conceal the tormenting anxiety he felt under the veil of extreme respect. He began to address me in a style of studied compliment; but without allowing him to proceed, I said, "Pray, sir, what is your post in this kingdom?"

"Madam," he replied, hesitatingly, "I am Comptroller-General of the Finances."

"And I, sir," I cried, "am mistress of the King of France—a place I intend to keep; nor can I look on and see any person endeavouring to supplant me in it, more especially when that person happens to be one who has hitherto professed to be my friend."

"Nay, madam," the Abbé answered, endeavouring to treat the matter jestingly, "I can affirm that I never thought of becoming your rival."

"No," I exclaimed, indignantly, "not for yourself but for your daughter would you seek to supplant me in the affections of the King. However, I warn you I am aware of your treachery, and since you would have war you shall have it openly and fairly. Do you understand?"

The unfortunate Abbé, frightened at the excess of my wrath, did not attempt to resent the charge, but sought by excuses, denials and protestations of innocence to refute it. In vain. I would not even listen to him, but continued adducing fresh proofs of his treachery, till I convinced him of my entire knowledge of his villainous plots against me,

as well as his design of introducing his daughter to the notice of Louis XV. The Abbé was beginning to submit, and I was growing somewhat milder, when the door of an adjoining chamber opened and Comte Jean entered. The poor Comptroller had indeed only escaped Charybdis to fall into Scylla; for my brother-in-law, addressing him with every symptom of the most violent anger, exclaimed: "Let me tell you, M. l'Abbé, I will have none of your intrigues here; I am weary of them! So, *morbleu!* you would dare to attempt to become our rival?—you would presume to cross our path? You are a villain, and if you do not swear to lay aside your traitorous schemes, I will take care you shall not be in office long." The trembling Abbé knew not what to reply; and the infuriated Comte Jean, who would never listen to reason where our interests were concerned, continued: "And you would fain take the King into your own hands, and appropriate all the profit resulting therefrom to your own advantage, would you? You have committed high treason, and dearly shall you answer for it."

The Abbé sought in vain to speak; his tongue appeared to refuse its office. Before Comte Jean could again attack him the King was announced; and the Comte du Barri, unwilling to meet His Majesty while suffering under so violent an agitation, disappeared through the door by which he had entered, while the Comptroller-General, hastily struggling to recover from his late terrors, attempted to pay his respects to his Sovereign, but in so confused and embarrassed a manner that Louis XV. easily perceived something uncommon had taken place.

Immediately the Abbé Terray had departed, the King questioned me as to the scene he appeared to have interrupted when he entered the room. Any other than myself would have beaten about the bush or have fabricated some tale for the occasion. But I did better, for in conformity with my usual practice, I related the exact truth —a plan I always found most successful, and which I strenuously recommend to be followed even at Court.

"Sire," I replied, "your minister, not satisfied with discharging the duties of his own office would fain entrench upon mine, and I have expressed to him my just resentment of his conduct."

"I do not comprehend you," answered the King.

"Oh, yes!" I cried, "Your Majesty understands full well to what I allude. The Abbé Terray is desirous of offering his daughter, Madame Dumerval, for your acceptance, and you, who would not, he believes, refuse to receive the daughter of a priest, might find it no very difficult matter to put up with a mistress who is said to be tolerably good-looking."

"I dislike everything bordering on an impious jest," replied Louis XV., blushing. "I can easily perceive that you are the friend and correspondent of Voltaire."

The King's answer gave me no surprise. This good Prince, however irregular in many of his habits, had a strong feeling of religious respect and veneration, even in the most trivial matters connected with it. Thus my using words having a reference at once to sacred and profane objects appeared to him as a species of sacrilege. I hastily answered: "Neither do I, Sire, approve of impiety or impious proceedings, and although the friend and correspondent of M. de Voltaire, I should be sorry to place myself upon bad terms with my confessor on that account. But permit me, Sire, to return to the business we were discussing. Your Abbé Terray is a contemptible wretch, ready to sell his own child."

"That is not possible," cried Louis XV.; "a priest prostitute his own daughter?"

"Exactly what I said this morning," I answered; "but I do not see anything so very extraordinary in a priest who has been impious enough to break his vow of chastity seeking to turn even his children to profit."

The King protested to me that he had never once bestowed an idea upon Madame Dumerval, and, whether from confidence in him or myself, I believed what he said. I will further add, by way of conclusion, that it cost the State a

tolerably large sum to effect a reconciliation between Comte Jean and the Abbé Terray, for my brother-in-law was only induced to pardon the injury his enemy had laboured to do him in consideration of an ample present made him by the King.

CHAPTER XXI

Post of Lieutenant-general of the Swiss Guards—Intrigues of the Comte d'Aiguillon—M. du Châtelet and Madame du Barri—Indemnity—Acknowledgments—The Jesuits commence a correspondence with Madame du Barri—Madame du Barri's nephew—Another intrigue—*La Vérité dans le Vin*—The reward—The Abbé Morthon and the basket of linen—The three glasses of lemonade.

WHILST I was thus busily employed in unravelling the intrigues formed against myself, there sprang up one in my own immediate circle against the Duc de Choiseul, who, although entirely dismissed from office and in utter disgrace, had been permitted to retain his commission as Lieutenant-general of the Swiss Guards, a post of great profit, bestowing on him who held it immense prerogatives, and affording numberless means of bringing about the return of the ex-minister to Court and of resuming his place in the good graces of the King. The Duc d'Aiguillon, who mortally hated the Duc de Choiseul, profited by an expression accidentally let fall by M. du Châtelet, a friend of the exiles, that for a suitable recompense the late minister would not object to lay down his post as Lieutenant-general of the Swiss Guards.

This imprudent acknowledgment was not thrown away upon the Duc d'Aiguillon, who lost no time in waiting on the King and apprising him that M. de Choiseul tendered his resignation.

"Well, then," replied Louis XV., "all we have to arrange is what he shall receive in lieu of it. I will take care that Madame de Choiseul shall be no loser by the exchange."

M. d'Aiguillon, by no means pleased to find His Majesty still so kindly disposed towards the exiles, lost not a minute in writing to M. du Châtelet, who was then at Chanteloup,

apprising him that the King desired M. de Choiseul would resign his commission, and wished to be informed what he would most desire as an equivalent. The latter, ignorant of all that had taken place, required the cessation of his exile, permission to return to Paris, with the payment of his debts, that is to say, two hundred thousand livres to his different creditors, and three hundred thousand to his wife, which, for a duke, was moderate enough.

This decision greatly alarmed the minister, who was far from intending his enemy should reap so rich a harvest by the affair. He presented himself to His Majesty, and giving his own statement of the matter, caused M. du Châtelet to be introduced. When he entered, the King enquired whether he was the bearer of M. de Choiseul's resignation of the post he had held in the Swiss Guards.

"Sire," replied M. du Châtelet, "the Duc de Choiseul tenders it most respectfully, but upon certain conditions."

"I listen to no conditions," answered Louis XV., "from those whose duty is obedience; let him submit to my commands in the first instance, and we shall see what can be done for him."

M. du Châtelet wrote to his friends on the subject, and M. de Choiseul, who never hesitated whenever his pride or magnanimity were concerned, hastened, with one stroke of his pen, to sign a full and unconditional resignation of his late commission. When the King received this proof of noble confidence on the part of his late minister, he began to haggle like any tradesman over a bargain, and hesitated so much as to what he should part with to the Duke, that I could scarcely help regretting the parsimony displayed by poor Louis in an affair in which the Duchesse de Choiseul was sacrificing her interests with the munificence of a queen.

Things were in this state when I received a most elegant little note from M. du Châtelet, praying me to grant him a moment's conversation. I knew but little of this nobleman except that he was the sworn friend and ally of the Choiseuls; nevertheless, I felt it a duty incumbent on me to grant him the audience he so gallantly prayed for. I therefore replied

to his note by naming a day and hour in which he might be certain of finding me disengaged.

You may easily imagine he was faithful to the appointment, and when the first compliments were over, he spoke to me with a frankness which induced me to converse with equal candour. He began by regretting that the arts of the disaffected should have been so successfully employed in sowing those seeds of discord between the Duc de Choiseul and myself which ultimately led to so deadly a strife. He did me the justice to confess that the manner in which I had conducted myself called for the warmest commendations. He then added:

"My friends, madam, are fully aware of their imprudence in carrying things to such extremities. The victory is your own, be satisfied with it; but do not abuse it."

"Sir," I replied, "I should never desire to oppress a fallen foe. Be assured such thoughts are as foreign to my heart as my inclinations."

"Then, madam," he quickly rejoined, "give us a proof of that generosity it is so easy to flatter ourselves we possess by condescending to exert your influence in facilitating an arrangement of which M. le Duc de Choiseul stands greatly in need."

"I am well aware," I answered, "that M. le Duc is in need of money, that he has many debts—and which of us have not? Be satisfied, sir, that I will this evening speak of it to the King, and that I will endeavour to procure from him more than his own views of economy might suggest his bestowing."

M. du Châtelet thanked me for my kindness with the air of a man who felt surprised at it, and, with often reiterated assurances of gratitude, he bowed and quitted me.

That very evening His Majesty did me the honour to sup with me. When the attendants had withdrawn and we were left to ourselves:

"Well, Sire," I asked, "how have you managed respecting the office vacated by M. de Choiseul? Is he satisfied with the equivalent you offer?

"Satisfied!" replied the King, "that would be a difficult matter, I believe; he is a species of living gulf, ready to swallow up the riches of the whole kingdom."

"But, Sire," said I, "what is it you offer him in return? What recompense do you propose giving him?"

"Much more than he has any reason to hope for—two hundred thousand livres in ready cash, and forty thousand livres in the form of a pension for his excellent Duchess."

"Two hundred thousand livres!" I exclaimed, murmuringly, "how paltry! What use would that be to him?"

"How you run on!" cried the King. "Do you know that it is a very considerable sum?"

"No matter, it is not sufficient for you to offer, and you must increase it to oblige me."

"Do you know," answered Louis XV., "that you are very importunate—you who, of all people, should avoid speaking to me of such a subject?"

"It is time to be importunate, Sire," I cried, "when your glory is at stake. Remember that the Duc de Choiseul consumed his princely revenues in your service, and that it ill becomes a great monarch like yourself to dismiss him like a mere hireling without any reward for past services."

"Well, then," said Louis XV., heaving a deep sigh, "I suppose I must add ten thousand livres to it."

"Ten thousand livres!" I exclaimed. "What you, Sire?—the King of France? Consider, I pray of you, ere you do so. Doubtless the Duke would make no further use of so paltry a sum than to distribute it among his servants to drink your health."

"Well, if it must indeed be so," said Louis XV., "you shall be satisfied. He shall have fifty thousand in addition."

"Come, come!" I cried; "let us end this matter, I conjure you. You shall bestow on him three hundred thousand livres, and increase the pension to sixty thousand."

"Tiresome creature!" answered the King; "you are resolved upon having your own way. You would soon weary me of disgracing my ministers, for at this rate I should be ruined."

I laughed heartily at this rebuke, and with equal heartiness I embraced the King.

"La France," I said, "you must not be such a niggard, or I really shall try, if it be possible for me, to love you less than I do now."

The King kissed my cheek, and as it was now very late we dropped the conversation.

On the following day I wrote to apprise M. du Châtelet of what I had done for his friend. He came personally to thank me, and declared to me that he should publish everywhere the *magnanimity* of my conduct. These were his words, which I do not repeat from female vanity, but because I relate whatever happened with the fidelity of the strictest historian. I must not forget to mention here that the Duc d'Aiguillon did not coincide in the approbation bestowed on me by the Choiseul party, and, notwithstanding his natural generosity, made some show of anger upon the occasion. However, as his conscience and reason both whispered that I had acted rightly, he soon recovered his good-humour.

The first visit I received from Madame de Mirepoix she embraced me warmly.

"You have conducted yourself like an angel," she said; "and henceforward the people must adore you, or they will be sad, ungrateful beings. Your noble revenge is vaunted to the skies by all ranks and conditions."

"Do you, then, suppose others would not have done the same?" I said.

"I do not know," she answered. "One may easily pardon even bitter enemies—it even produces good effects to do so; but to render them essential service is an act of heroism but too rare in the age and country in which we live."

After having well praised and flattered me, the good Maréchale, who knew all that was passing, related to me several other intrigues of which I had never conceived an idea. She informed me that the command of the Swiss Guards had only been demanded from the Duc de Choiseul that it might be bestowed on the Comte de Provence—the officers of that regiment having themselves supplicated His

Majesty to make the exchange. This I determined to ascertain; and I learned that the young Prince had been instigated to the measure by the Princesse de Marsan, who, tired of doing nothing, had commenced intriguing as a recreation, as well as for the good of her health. I likewise heard that the Duc de la Vauguyon, who, like a real Jesuit, hated the Duc de Choiseul for having procured the dismissal of his friends, had availed himself of all the influence he possessed over the mind of the young Prince to irritate him against the ex-minister.

Those good fathers (I mean the Jesuits), although banished from France, were yet to be found everywhere, and in no place did they more abound or possess greater power than at Versailles. I was amongst the number of their friends, and I must confess that I was not a little surprised when, about the commencement of 1772, I received the diploma of their order, and the sacred scapulary. I could not but look upon myself as a strange member for a religious society—I who had hitherto been devoted solely to love and pleasure. Nevertheless, I received the present as the sinning Magdalen, until the hour should arrive when I might become the repentant Magdalen. Now to return to the affair of the Swiss Guards.

I did not forget that I had a long account to settle with their Royal Highnesses, that is to say, the Dauphin and the Comte de Provence. I had not forgotten the abrupt manner in which these Princes desisted all at once from the marks of friendship they thought proper to offer me, and I thought I now saw, in the present occasion, an opportunity in which, without being malicious, I might thwart their inclinations and render their ambition futile. With this view I demanded and received from the King the nomination of the Comte d'Artois to the post left vacant by the Duc de Choiseul.

The Comte d'Artois was the best and most amiable of all the Princes, and, although still quite a child, felt the most lively joy at the present bestowed on him by his grandfather. And to whom could it have been more worthily given than to one whose ardent and military spirit had already declared

itself? He was aware of the part I had taken in procuring the appointment for him, and his conduct abundantly testified his sense of my preference. His brother, the Comte de Provence, was finely caught, and both himself and the Dauphin were taught by it to perceive that I was worth the trouble of treating more considerately than they had acted towards me. However, it was not long ere the Count took his revenge in the following manner. The situation of first page to the Dauphin having become vacant, Comte Jean requested I would solicit it for his son. I did so, and the King promised compliance, only recommending me to observe secrecy respecting it for the present. Unfortunately, I confided it to Comte Jean, who related it in confidence to his son, who, in his turn, found it impossible to conceal it from a few particular friends, who again spread the welcome news, till at last everybody's secret became nobody's secret. Immediately on its reaching the ears of the Comte de Provence, he hastened to the Dauphin.

"Allow me to congratulate you, my dear brother," said he, "upon the new page you have received into your establishment. He belongs to a good family, and has plenty of powerful friends in the Castle."

The Dauphin and Dauphiness, with the utmost amazement, enquired of whom he spoke, and when the Comte de Provence had uttered the name of the Vicomte Adolphe du Barri, the Dauphiness burst into tears, while the Dauphin protested that never should a nephew of mine enter into his service.

We were not long in hearing of this. My brother-in-law was for carrying things with a high hand, and retaining the post by violence, if necessary; but I was not of the same opinion. Nevertheless, I embraced the earliest opportunity of speaking of it to the King, dwelling much upon the hostile feelings expressed by his grandson. The King sought to elude the subject, but, finding I continued to press it, he at last replied:

"What can you expect me to do more? I cannot force the Dauphin to take a page who is disagreeable to him; he

would, perhaps, break out into a fit of rage and ill-treat the Vicomte Adolphe."

"How, Sire! ill-treat my nephew?"

"Even so, my sweet Countess. Remember that the Dauphin is heir to my crown."

At these words, which sounded on my ear as auguring ill to come, I involuntarily burst into tears.

"Tranquillise yourself," said Louis XV.; "I will arrange things so as to satisfy you. Let the place remain vacant for the present; I will take care no other person shall be nominated; and with the spirit of opposition manifested on the part of the Dauphin, it is as much as your self-pride should permit you to ask."

It was in vain I prayed and entreated of the King. I could obtain no more. This disappointment was but poorly atoned for by the flattering verses I received relative to my conduct towards the Duc de Choiseul. The verses themselves were pretty enough, as you shall hear:

"Chacun doutait, en vous voyant si belle,
Si vous étiez ou femme ou déité,
Mais c'est trop sûr, votre rare bonté
N'est pas l'effet d'une simple mortelle;
Quoiqu'ait jadis écrit, en certain lieu,
Un roi prophète en sa sainte démence,
Quoiqu'un poète ait dit la vengeance,
N'est que d'un homme, et le pardon d'un Dieu."

You must admit that, with the exception of some slight faults, these verses are excellent. How many such have I received! and what sums have I not expended in rewarding such poetic talent!

We passed the close of the year at Choisy. I was very partial to it as a residence, and found plenty of entertainment whilst there. I was accompanied by two ladies, the Maréchale and Marquise de Montmorency, the former my inseparable, and the latter my dearest friend. One evening we were entertained by a represention of Collé's comedy of *La Vérité dans le Vin*, a play written with some degree of grossness, but still so lively and full of wit as to make us all laugh heartily. The King joined in our mirth, and expressed his warmest

admiration of the piece. On the following day, as we were discussing the enjoyment we had derived from it the King observed:

"There is something natural in this play—not like the formal, stiff-starched pieces of Voltaire."

"Nay, Sire," I replied, "that is not fair. Surely you can praise M. Collé without speaking unfavourably of M. de Voltaire."

"Has M. Collé any pension?" asked Louis XV., thinking to put me in a passion.

"Yes, Sire," I answered, boldly, "but that need not hinder Your Majesty from bestowing on him a second."

"No, no! that will never do," the King exclaimed; "we must not thrust pensions down the throat of every man who is capable of writing a diverting play."

"Well then, Sire, if you disapprove of the pension, you may at least present M. Collé with some mark of your Royal approbation."

"With all my heart. Give him twenty-five louis."

"Will Your Majesty pay them back to me?" I asked, laughingly.

"Assuredly I will, madam," said the King, laughing in his turn, "if you will trust me so large a sum."

"Ladies," I exclaimed, raising my voice so that it could be heard by both my friends, who were sitting at the end of the room, "the King presents M. Collé with fifty louis."

"I said five-and-twenty," said Louis XV. in a whisper to me. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he added, "Yes, yes, ladies, madam is right; I make Collé a present of fifty louis." And in this manner did I compel the King to be generous in spite of himself.

The society at Choisy was limited but select, and, strange to say, we continued to pass our time cheerfully, without having occasion to call in the aid of scandal. One circumstance, related to us while there, which you may deem closely bordering on it, I will relate for your entertainment. The conversation happened once to fall upon a lady, the Marquise de Brossot, a person of high birth and extreme pride, who

had accepted as her lover a certain abbé named Morthon, a diminutive being who resembled a dwarf in stature and a giant in vice. One evening when the abbé had called to enquire after the health of the family, and, finding the lady alone, was indulging in a little harmless flirtation, a sudden noise arose in the adjoining chamber. The lady quickly recognised the voice and step of her husband. What was to be done? She well knew his suspicions relative to the abbé, and eagerly casting her eyes around discovered a clothes-basket which had been accidentally left in the room. The lady compelled the trembling abbé to crouch down into the basket, over which she hastily threw a green cloth. The husband entered:

"Good-day, madam. Were you alone?"

"Yes, sir, I was meditating."

"Oh, indeed! a very good employment. I too have been deeply considering a misfortune which has just befallen my great cousin, Larimière."

"Misfortune, dear sir! what——"

"Oh, the most unpleasant thing in the world. He fancied himself as sure of the virtue and rectitude of his wife as I am of mine. He had gone out—he returned—he found his wife alone, as you were when I entered—he wished to sit down, and taking an arm-chair drew it towards him, when behold! behind it he discovered the family hair-dresser!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the lady. "I know my relation, and will answer for her principles."

"I tell you the thing is true; the man was as surely concealed behind the arm-chair as there is someone concealed at this moment in this basket."

As he spoke he approached the article in question, pulled off its covering, and discovered the miserable object it contained. The consternation of the guilty pair may be better imagined than described.

"Sir," said the Marquis, tranquilly, "your habit protects you. As for you, madam, you quit my house for that of your mother this very evening," saying which he left the room.

Louis XV. admired the conduct of the Marquis. "He must be a man of sense, as well as great coolness," added he.

"In my time," observed the Duc de Duras, "he was accounted the first fencer in the kingdom."

"Do you know anything of him, Duc de Duras?" enquired Louis XV.

"Not personally, Sire, but I have heard an anecdote related of him."

"Let us hear it," exclaimed the King.

The Duc de Duras replied in these words:

"The Marquis de Brossot was passing through Metz to rejoin his regiment. He happened to enter a *café* frequented by officers only. These gentlemen chose to consider themselves offended by the appearance of a gentleman not dressed in regimentals, and they determined to quiz him. Meanwhile, the Marquis, thinking only of refreshing himself, demanded a glass of lemonade, which was brought him; one of the officers knocked it over; a second was called for and served in the same manner; a third underwent a similar fate. At length the traveller rose. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'short reckonings make long friends. You have thought proper to destroy three glasses of lemonade, and I ask those three gentlemen who have insulted me to meet me in the field. My name is the Marquis de Brossot, and there is my plan of route.'

"At these words the unthinking men, who had thus involved themselves in a quarrel with a brother officer, saw but too late the folly of their conduct. Honour forbade their refusing the challenge; the enraged Marquis insisted upon satisfaction, and shortly laid the three offenders dead at his feet. That done, M. de Brossot wiped his sword, bowed to the officers who were present, and continued his route."

When the Duc de Duras had finished, Louis XV. remarked, "'Tis a pity the three officers did not escape as easily as the abbé you were just telling us of. It is a sad thing to expose one's life for three glasses of lemonade."

CHAPTER XXII

Death of Helvetius—The King's indifference to artists and works of art—The Comtesse du Barri patronises them—Vernet—Doyen—The farmers-general present an address to the Countess—The quarrels with the Chancellor—The Duchesse de Mazarin—The gold watch—The castigations.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1771 died a man who had acquired both reputation and fortune by the publication of a work entitled "De l'Esprit." I allude to Helvetius, who before he became an author was one of the farmers-general. He had become a philosopher the better to defend the rights of the people, after having clipped them as closely as any of his brethren. I will not enter into the merits of a work in which he asserts that all men are born with similar qualities and dispositions. He might just as plausibly argue that all mankind are born with the same features and cast of countenance. I have heard many fine arguments both for and against this theory, and I remember also that this epicurean philosopher maintains the mainspring of all our actions to be the pleasure we propose to derive from them, as if many distinct reasons could not be easily assigned for the commission of different acts. It is even true that M. Helvetius, giving unbounded scope to his acceptation of the word *pleasure*, declares that a man may find it in being able to dispense with it altogether. I have never, with all my experience in what the world styles pleasure, been able to comprehend this metaphysical view of it. But why do I confuse myself in seeking to explain what I confess is past my comprehension? Or why should I take upon myself to examine into the opinions of M. Helvetius, when I meant but to speak of his death?

Louis XV. was not sorry to lose even one from the great

body of literati, who had all, with vast pomp and parade, gone and ranged themselves under the banners of the Duc de Choiseul; and the King, seeing in this manifestation of their grateful attachment to their former patron a species of rebellion against himself, was less inclined than ever to receive them into his favour.

Perhaps you may have imagined the King had naturally a feeling of regard for artists. Alas! my friend, undeceive yourself, I pray; for though Louis XV. occasionally bestowed flattering distinctions upon some of their community, he was very far from having either esteem or affection for them as a body. He cared no more for painters than he did for sculptors, and regarded these latter as little as he did musicians. He was certainly more civilised in that respect during the life of Madame de Pompadour, who insisted upon playing the part of Mæcenas; but when my reign arrived he felt no small delight in discovering in me a corresponding indifference with his own for all matters connected with the fine arts. Louis XV. had neither taste nor perception to enjoy them. A picture by Greuze,[1] a sea-view by Vernet, a nymph by Pajou,[2] were objects which not only failed to excite his enthusiasm, but even to produce the slightest pleasure in their contemplation. These masterpieces of art were to him but as a canvas daubed with colours, or a block of marble cut and polished; and before the finest statue that could be chiselled by the hand of the sculptor Louis XV. would stand even more frigid and more inanimate than the figure he gazed at.

I might have been well enough disposed to imitate the apathy of the King, but I was not permitted to practise it; for, next to women, wine and cards, my brother-in-law loved the arts and artists. He was much with them, and purchased their productions at the highest prices. His example was imitated by the rest of the nobility, each of whom had some

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1 Born 1725, died 1805.

2 Born 1730, died 1809. He executed a celebrated bust of Madame du Barri.

favourite to recommend to my patronage and protection. At first I bought the different articles they offered me as a matter of necessity, afterwards from mere caprice, and, ultimately, from pure taste. By degrees I became wholly absorbed in the pure and innocent enjoyment produced by a more intimate acquaintance with the works of genius; and I cannot but imagine that those who executed them must have been more flattered with the open and unfeigned admiration I expressed than with the ostentatious protection of the Marquise de Pompadour.

Vernet was my chosen painter, and enriched Lucienne with his *chefs d'œuvre*. Some of my friends brought me word that he had just completed two seapieces that he had painted by command of Prince Larensky, and the high terms in which they were mentioned inspired me with a lively desire to see them. One fine morning I contrived to give Vernet an unexpected call, in company with my sister-in-law Chon, who gave herself the airs and consequence of an amateur, and affected to be an excellent judge of pictures. We were attended by the Duc de Cossé-Brissac and the handsome Vaudreuil.

Vernet showed us the two pictures he had just completed. One represented a frightful tempest, the other a delicious calm, but each was equally beautiful. Whilst the rest of the company were loudly expatiating on their merits I took Vernet by the hand.

"These pictures must be mine," I said.

"Ah, madam," he answered, "it grieves me much to be compelled to refuse them to you, but indeed they are not mine to bestow."

"I will hear no excuse," I cried; "I must have them. They are very beautiful, certainly, but you can easily paint others as good, and for that reason I shall carry off these. Come, gentlemen," I said, addressing my two attending friends, "each of you take one of these pictures and see it carefully deposited in my carriage."

Poor Vernet, in despair, in vain prayed and implored me to forego my purpose. I turned a deaf ear to all his remon-

strances, and, approaching a table, I found an old pen and a slip of paper, with which I hastily scrawled an order for 50,000 livres, payable at sight by Beaujon, the Court banker. After this I hastened home full of joy at my triumph.

The following day I displayed my conquests to the King, mentioning at the same time all that had passed between Vernet and myself.

"What do you think of them?" I enquired.

"They are very fine," answered Louis XV.; "but then, 50,000 livres! 'tis a great sum."

"My poor, dear Louis," cried I, laughing, "you are growing as saving as any old citizen."

There was another painter who also held a place in my favour and regard, one who possessed both imagination and feeling—I mean Doyen.[1] His colouring was frequently esteemed faulty, but not so in my opinion. However, as I do not presume to be an infallible judge of such matters, I will not trouble you further with my remarks. Doyen, of whom I knew but very little, gained my patronage by an act of well-turned gallantry; for having, when introduced to him by some friends, desired he would paint me a picture in his best style, he, with great tact, chose for his subject the fair Thessalian who, being summoned before some Roman emperor upon a charge of witchcraft, made no other defence than by taking off her veil and displaying her beauty, which she thus insinuated was the only magic she had used. The application appeared to me fine and delicate. As he required me to sit several times before he was satisfied with the likeness, I accorded him free permission to visit me as frequently as he deemed proper. Greuze was also among the number of my favourites, and in a very short time I was the general patroness of artists—an additional source of annoyance to the cabal formed against me.

As we were removing to Compiègne, the King said to me, "There seems no end to the vexations so unjustly heaped upon you. Some of your enemies have contrived to involve

1 Born 1726, died 1806.

you in disputes with my whole family. I owe you a recompense for all you have endured from them, and you shall have it."

I could not picture to myself what this recompense would be. Sometimes I imagined my nephew would be appointed first page to the Dauphin, or that I myself should receive the nomination to some high post at Court; but all my guesses failed of finding out the real compensation awarded me by His Majesty. This was no other than a formal invitation to sit at table with the Royal Family. The Dauphiness, out of consideration for her grandfather, had persuaded the Dauphin to conduct himself with politeness towards me; and during the whole entertainment I was so well and honourably treated that I have no doubt my enemies did not digest this day's dinner as easily as I did. However, the spirit of discord soon resumed her rights, and the events of the same year placed me on a worse footing than ever with Her Royal Highness Marie Antoinette.

At the beginning of the year 1772 I received an honour singular enough. As His Majesty, when he visited me at Lucienne had come, not *incognito*, but with a certain degree of state and ceremony, it was understood, after this visit, that the King publicly recognised me for his mistress. The body of the farmers-general were amongst the first to salute me by that title, and on New Year's Day they came to present a complimentary address. They might with justice have complimented me upon the facility with which I got rid of money, but they favoured me with an address, of which I comprehended not one word. This was not all the absurdity of the scene: I took upon myself to reply to them, and made them a speech of thanks well worthy their own.

Meanwhile a species of intrigue was set on foot to separate me from the Chancellor. M. de Maupeou had that spirit of insatiable ambition which could not be satisfied with less than supremacy in the Council. The other ministers, of course, were not disposed to suffer this, and exerted all their endeavours to procure his discharge from office. However, happily for M. de Maupeou, he was, of all the secretaries of

State, the one whom the King most preferred, and of whose discernment he entertained the highest opinion.

Some officious friend took upon himself to inform me that if I had failed in procuring for my nephew, the Vicomte Adolphe, the place I solicited, it was not with His Royal Highness the Comte de Provence I should feel displeased, as he had proposed no fresh candidate for it, but that my anger should rather be directed against the Chancellor, who had endeavoured to procure it for his own son.

"In that case," I replied, "I am well paid for the trouble I have taken to place the command of a regiment in his family."

I must explain this rejoinder of mine by telling you that I had, in a measure, compelled the Minister of the War Department to bestow the rank of colonel upon the Marquis de Maupeou. I did not use much ceremony with the Chancellor whilst reproaching him for his ingratitude. He replied by accusing his enemies without attempting to justify himself. However it may have been, from that moment I ceased calling him my cousin, an appellation which was likewise dropped on the part of the Chancellor. Nothing could exceed the facility with which our relationship was first established, unless it was the ease with which we both shook it off when no longer agreeable to maintain it.

About this time an illustrious deserter quitted the enemy's camp to enlist under my banners. This was the Duchesse de Mazarin, who, plainly perceiving that if she would thrive at Court she must forsake the Choiseul party, abandoned her former friends and came to offer her friendship to me. She was a most singular woman, towards whom Nature had acted with more than usual caprice: gifted with beauty, she failed in pleasing; generous, yet reputed avaricious; good at heart, yet wearing the semblance of ill-nature; possessed of much good sense, yet for ever involving herself in perplexities and difficulties, she did nothing at the right moment, and was for ever too late in all she undertook. She commissioned the Duc de Cossé-Brissac to inform me that she should be most happy if I would permit her to pay me a visit. I mentioned

it to the Maréchale de Mirepoix, and begged her advice on the subject.

"My dear creature," replied she, "the best thing you can do is to receive her with open arms. The public cry will proclaim her a traitor to her old friends—but what does that concern you? She is a person of much consequence in fashionable life, and she seeks your acquaintance; she is the first to make advances. That ought to suffice, and teach you to despise what may be said by others."

In conformity with this advice I caused the Duchesse de Mazarin to be informed, through the Duc de Cossé-Brissac, that her presence would afford me much pleasure. Accordingly she arrived, decked in her gayest attire, but awkward and embarrassed in her manner. Not knowing exactly what to say, she began a string of the most silly and incoherent reasons possible, in order to place her present line of conduct in a favourable point of view. Two words would have sufficed. She might have said, "Madam, you being the King's mistress, and I being desirous of obtaining the favour of His Majesty, I am willing to sacrifice to you my former ties and friendships." She might have expressed herself thus, but she did not. Nevertheless Louis XV. received her very cordially; and the cabal, seeing the number of its supporters decrease daily, felt no small uneasiness at this new defection.

Whilst these things were going on, the beloved friend of my heart, Geneviève Mathon, furnished me with a favourable opportunity of exercising my benevolence. The occasion I allude to was as follows:

There lived about this time in the Rue St. Martin, in a small chamber looking into a court, a young and friendless orphan of about seventeen years of age, named Adèle Paschal. Adèle depended solely upon the labour of her hands for a subsistence; but as her wants were few and easily satisfied, and as she worked incessantly, she contrived to maintain herself, however humbly. In spite of her extreme youth, Adèle was virtuous and steady in her principles, and, what was still more to her credit, resolutely determined always to

remain so. In the same house with herself a young and handsome man had taken up his abode. You shall know, all in good time, who and what he was; the plan of my story does not require that I should satisfy you just now. This young man, while looking from his window, which faced that of Adèle, saw her, and fell desperately in love with her. All the time he could spare from his occupation he passed at the window watching and admiring the poor orphan. One Sunday, however, when he observed her quit her apartment, he summoned up sufficient courage to follow her even into the church of St. Nicholas, where, having remained with her during the celebration of Mass, he ventured as they quitted the place to present, although with a trembling hand, the holy water for her acceptance. Adèle received these marks of attachment with a deep blush, nor could she conceal from herself that she already felt an equal interest in the young stranger who, after passing part of every day in gazing at her from his window so modestly and unassumingly, ventured to attend her upon the only occasion on which she ever quitted her home.

Things went on as favourably as the young lovers could desire, until, all at once, they saw themselves upon the point of being for ever separated. In the same house with themselves lived the proprietor of it, an ugly old man, very miserly, and what is worse, very wicked. He had cast his eyes upon poor Adèle, whose beauty had so struck him that he forgot both his age and his avarice. In vain he sought to ensnare her by a profusion of fulsome compliments, and when they failed, laid siege to her heart by offering a variety of little presents. All were refused, until the old dotard had the audacity to intrude into the orphan's presence and shock her ears with his infamous proposals. The trembling girl repulsed him with horror, and commanded him to leave her apartment, assuring him she should take the earliest opportunity of quitting his house. The enraged and mortified old man swore to revenge himself; and the following day, when he met his family at breakfast, he asserted that he had been robbed of a gold watch, and declared his intention of having

every part of the house searched for it. His son took in the situation at a glance; for I must now clear up the little mystery of my tale and introduce this son as the admirer and lover of Adèle, who, while at his window feasting his eyes with their accustomed gaze at his fair neighbour, had seen his father cautiously ascend to her chamber. However, the search commenced, and the watch, as may readily be supposed, was found in Adèle's apartment, and she was seized as the guilty person and committed to prison for the theft.

Geneviève Mathon, who knew Adèle, was no sooner apprised of her misfortune than she hastened, first to visit her in her prison, and next to fly to implore my protection for her. I immediately wrote to M. de Sartines, but the son of the old miser had been beforehand with me; for, not daring to accuse his father while asserting the innocence of his mistress, he generously took the whole weight of guilt upon himself, and declared that he it was who, to punish the unfortunate girl for the virtuous resistance she had offered to his wishes, had concealed the watch between the mattress of her bed. M. de Sartines, who sometimes administered justice as rigidly as any Turkish cadi, was in no haste to terminate the affair, which he resolved to sift to the bottom. But I considered marriage was the only way of ending this romance properly, and therefore procured for the lover a lucrative situation in one of the provinces, where I believe he is still living with his wife, far from his sordid old father.

This history is simple enough, and I only record it in honour of my friend Geneviève.

I will now relate to you a circumstance which occurred in a more exalted sphere of action, nearly about the same period.

I was one evening at Paris at the house of the Maréchale de Mirepoix. We were in deep conversation, when the Chevalier de Boufflers was announced. You know that the predilection of the good Maréchale for the mistresses of a King extended likewise to their children, and that, consequently, the Chevalier de Boufflers, who derived his birth

from Madame de Boufflers, mistress to King Stanislaus, who was, besides, his godfather, came in for a large share of her affection. When the Chevalier entered he paid his compliments in his usual silly and conceited manner; then, drawing a pair of pistols from his pocket, he smiled and laid them upon a stand. The Maréchale, whose curiosity was awakened by the action, exclaimed, in a tone of terror she sought in vain to dissemble:

"Mercy upon us, Chevalier, what are you about? And, for heaven's sake, what are those horrid-looking pistols for?"

"Nothing now," answered De Boufflers, coolly; "the thing is over. By to-morrow it will be in everybody's mouth. I must give you the pleasure of hearing it first."

"You excite my curiosity, Chevalier. Pray let us hear it."

"Listen then," and the Chevalier began as follows:

"You know the Marquise de C——, whose portrait in crayons you saw me take at the house of Madame de Luxembourg. I had been on the best possible terms with her for nearly a month, when, a few days since, she took it into her head to quit me for that great overgrown being, Bezenval. I presume you have heard the epigram I wrote on the occasion?"

"Yes, yes," replied the Maréchale; "I know it well. It is a charming thing."

"Severe enough," I added.

The Chevalier continued: "Well, I sent the epigram to the Marchioness, and I learned from good authority that it almost drove her mad. However, this morning I received a most gracious letter from her, entreating me to call on her this evening at eight o'clock, beseeching my pardon for her late conduct, and assuring me of her readiness to make every apology and concession I could desire. Accordingly at eight o'clock I bent my steps towards the place of rendezvous; but, ladies, as I know your sex are tolerably vindictive, I would not trust myself without the company of my friends here" (taking up the pistols); "and well it was I did not, for scarcely had I entered the chamber where the Mar-

chioness sat, and whilst I was paying my compliments, than four great rascals sprang out of an adjoining closet, and, without giving me time to seize my weapons, began to strip me and fasten me down to a bed. In vain I roared for help, struggled and fought; my efforts were in vain; and, under the eyes of the Marchioness, stretched upon her own bed, they flogged me with a whip until she chose to command them to desist."

"How!" cried the Maréchale, "flogged you? What, *you*, Chevalier?"

"Yes, madam," he replied, "even me. This unpleasant ceremony over, I was permitted to rise; and, resuming my clothes, I suddenly drew out my pistols, which I presented at the villains who had so maltreated me. 'Very well, gentlemen,' cried I, 'everyone in his turn. I have had mine; it is madam's at present; and I promise you that I will blow out the brains of all four of you if you do not serve the lady precisely as you have done me. Let all things be fair and honourable, that neither may have reason to accuse you of partiality.' The tone in which I spoke allowed of no hesitation; the Marchioness, screaming in her turn and calling aloud for mercy, was laid in my place, and her beautiful white skin was not more delicately handled than mine had been, until I gave the signal to stop their flagellation. I then bade the party adieu, recommending the Marchioness to publish the transaction, and promising her that, for my own part, I should be quite certain to do so. And you see I have kept my word."

The Maréchale loudly extolled the conduct of the Chevalier, who, inflated with vanity and self-importance, bustled away that he might carry the account of his exploit to other quarters.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Morangies suit—Death of Madame de Favart—The Abbé d'Erse and the Duchesse de Chaulnes—The Abbé de Boisgelin, physician and confessor—The Abbé Delille and M. Suard admitted into the Academy—Louis XV. objects to their nomination—The Abbé Delille and the Comtesse du Barri—Death of the Duc de la Vauguyon—The Prince de Beauvau regains the favour of the King.

About this time a most scandalous affair in the shape of a lawsuit caused considerable noise: it respected a sum of 100,000 crowns, claimed by the Dujonquais and the widow Veron from the Marquis Molette Morangies, but which the latter denied having ever received. The thing looked suspicious on both sides, and it became difficult to determine on which side the guilt lay. On the one hand, the Marquis possessed but a very indifferent reputation, was running through his fortune by anticipation, and was further known to be a professed gambler. All this was but little in his favour, but, on the other side it was asked, how could the Dujonquais have been able to amass so large a sum. They endeavoured to explain the circumstances by which the money had been acquired, and certainly the explanation was but little to their credit. In a word, it was impossible to take either side in this disgraceful contest without fear of danger and mistake.

However, the courtiers declared for the Marquis, while the citizens, delighted to be at liberty to oppose a nobleman, took part with the claimants. This division put the King into an ill-humour. In his conscience he believed that the claim of the Dujonquais was just, but to the world in general he feigned to side with the Marquis, for fear of involving himself with the nobility; and I really believe he would have been content to have got rid of the disagreeable discussion it occasioned by paying the disputed sum himself. M. de Voltaire, who never lost an oppor-

tunity of displaying his skill as a writer, immediately took up the affair, and wrote several pamphlets in favour of the Marquis, by which he drew upon himself a general ill-will, without obtaining the slightest thanks from the party whose cause he chose to advocate. This was playing an unlucky game.

The death of Madame de Favart,[1] a performer at the Théâtre des Italiennes, was not an unimportant affair at the period of which I am speaking. The Abbé de Voisenon displayed a sorrow at her loss which was truly edifying. The King, who possessed the most exquisite tact, remarked upon this occasion, "I do not forbid a priest taking a mistress, but I object to his publicly bewailing her loss. The privileges of the clergy have not reached so far yet." And happening to be present when the Abbé de Voisenon was promoted to the bishopric of Montrouge, His Majesty observed, "Let him make much of his promotion, for it will be the only bishopric he will ever hold."

There were some ecclesiastics of excellent family and connections whom he never would invest with either mitre or crosier. I might cite the Abbé d'Erse among others, a man possessed of the strength and frame of a Samson and a prodigious favourite with the female part of his flock.

This abbé had lately obtained a footing in the house of the Duchesse de Chaulnes, who cast many a loving glance at him; but the handsome priest turned a deaf ear to all the amorous sighs and hints of the lady, his affections being already engrossed by her waiting-woman, who had the advantage of both youth and beauty; and she, finding no objection to the abbé, whose person, particularly, was much to her taste, was prevailed upon, in a yielding hour, to grant him a rendezvous. The place selected was the antechamber of the Duchess, who, from her apartment, had overheard the whole conversation, and vowed to take a signal vengeance for such an insult. Twelve o'clock was

1 Born 1727, died 1772. Marshal Saxe conceived a violent passion for her.

the hour agreed on, but at three-quarters past eleven the Duchess entered the chamber of her conscious attendant, informed her that she was acquainted with her intrigue, bitterly reproached her with her ingratitude, and commanded her to retire to another apartment, as she was desirous of conversing uninterruptedly with the abbé upon his want of respect towards herself, as well as the immorality of his conduct. This done, and the weeping *soubrette* got rid of, the Duchess hastily took possession of her servant's couch, which she had scarcely done than she heard the stealthy step of the abbé, who was hurrying on the wings of love to meet his Dulcinea. No light was burning, consequently the mistake was not easily discovered, and the lover retired, after a stay of some hours, filled with delight at the sincere affection his mistress expressed for him.

Early on the following morning the disappointed Abigail sought her admirer to explain the reasons which had prevented her from keeping the appointment of the preceding evening. Imagine the rage of the priest. However, he resolved upon playing a similar joke upon her who had thus duped him, and, proceeding to the dressing-room of the Duchess when he knew both herself and her attendant were there, he contrived to solicit a second meeting, so as to be heard by the mistress, although the request was, of course, made to the servant. Great was the joy of Madame de Chaulnes, who flattered herself she should manage as cleverly as she had done the night previous. Again she took possession of her woman's chamber, and in vain waited several hours for the coming of the abbé. At length, weary of this delay, she procured a light, and, proceeding to the room she had appropriated to the use of her servant, she discovered the perfidious priest fast asleep by the side of her handmaiden. I leave you to imagine her rage and mortification. The adventure was soon spread abroad. The girl became an object of no small interest and admiration to all the lords of the Court, while the ladies declared that the Abbé d'Erse was a charming rake.

M. d'Erse was not the only ecclesiastic who deserved that

title. There was an Abbé de Boisgelin, of whom so many anecdotes are told that I know not which to select. However, I will cite the following, as being the one the gallant abbé most delighted to tell of himself:

Among the many women he was in the habit of meeting in high life was the wife of an exceedingly rich man, who had exchanged his plebeian appellation of Renaud for the more elegantly-sounding name of Saint-Renaud. Well, this M. de Saint-Renaud was ugly, old and jealous, while his lady was young, pretty and ardently desiring to meet with some interesting and romantic adventure. The Abbé de Boisgelin easily read her wishes, and succeeded in obtaining her favourable notice. The intrigue was yet in all the charm of freshness and novelty when the husband, who, as I have before mentioned, was often visited by the green-eyed monster, took it into his head to be jealous of the Marquis de Chabrillant, and fearing that a longer stay in Paris might prove fatal to his honour, he abruptly carried his wife into the country. M. de Boisgelin was not to be cheated thus: he followed his charmer to her place of retirement, where he contrived to procure an introduction to the house of the suspicious husband. The silly old dotard complained to the abbé of slight indisposition. M. de Boisgelin declared himself well skilled in medicine, felt his pulse, asked his symptoms, and declared with a solemn gravity of face and voice that poor M. de Saint-Renaud was seriously and mortally affected. The terrified patient, who both dreaded disease and had the complaint called fear, immediately went to bed. The abbé confessed him, implored him to remain tranquil till the morning, and quitted him with the assurance that he should pass the whole of the night in prayer for his recovery. You may easily imagine his devotions were not performed alone. This adventure was not long in becoming known; for the very next day M. de Saint-Renaud, astonished at waking in the full possession of his health, proclaimed, wherever he went, that he owed his miraculous cure entirely to the pious prayers of the worthy abbé. I can assure you that the affair proved by no means prejudicial to M. de Boisgelin; on the

contrary, it assisted him in the rapid promotion he continued to obtain, until at length he rose to the highest ecclesiastical dignities.

These two abbés have drawn me away from the thread of my story. I hasten to resume it. But first, I must speak to you of a literary occurrence which took place in this year (1772) and which involved me in deep disgrace with the philosophers, who, blinded by prejudice and ill-will, believed me to have been either the counsellor or author of an act of arbitrary power, with which, as you will easily perceive, I could have nothing to do.

The public was at that time much taken up by two men of letters; the one deservedly an object of interest, but how the other became so I could never find out. The former, who was no other than the Abbé Delille, had lately published a translation of Virgil's Georgics, written in the purest French verse, and esteemed by the best judges a masterly performance. The other had not distinguished himself by anything he had written; but then he contrived to impose so successfully on all with his air of unassuming good-humour, and introduced his trifles so happily that, almost upon his own assertion, he contrived to pass for a man of great talent. I must confess that he was far from being ignorant of all literary matters. He of whom I now speak was M. Suard.[1] Two vacant seats occurred at once at the French Academy, and these two celebrated men were elected on the same day to fill them. They had on their side a great majority, composed of the principal philosophers, who looked upon their admission as calculated to bring fresh proselytes to their doctrines; whilst against them was a minority consisting of prelates. The Abbé Delille was objected to as being suspected of heresy, and M. Suard for being an Encyclopædist. As editor of the *Gazette de France*, he was particularly obnoxious to M. de Richelieu. The Duke could not forget that this paper had frequently commented very severely upon his conduct, besides offering an easy channel for the publication of the most stinging satires and epigrams. For all this he

1 Born 1733, died 1817.

had long nursed his wrath, and he only waited a convenient opportunity to revenge himself.

It happened that M. de Richelieu sat as President of the Academy the very day these two personages were elected, and in his refined and deeply-rooted malice he resolved upon voting against the regulations; after which he departed triumphantly to Versailles, where, having obtained an audience of the King, he painted in the blackest colours the double choice made by the Academy. He was quickly followed by the Cardinal de la Roche Aymon, heaving grievous sighs and deeply deploring the abomination of electing two such dangerous characters, finishing by a protestation that the monarchy would be endangered should the King approve the late nominations. Next came a letter from Madame Louise stating that the French Academy was the scene of a most dangerous conspiracy to overthrow both the altar and the throne, and that the newly-elected Academicians were conspirators and traitors of the most dangerous kind. After perusing this epistle, the King, who was previously but little inclined to favour either the literati or the philosophers, immediately summoned the Duc de la Vrillière, and commanded him to write, in the name of his Sovereign, a letter of censure to the Academy, with orders to proceed to a fresh election.

This being done, both the public and the Academicians broke out in a torrent of reproaches against the Duc de Richelieu, saying that he should have announced to them previously the prejudices of His Majesty against the new candidates, and that, under any circumstances, as he very well knew who were likely to be chosen by the Academy, he should have enquired His Majesty's pleasure respecting them before matters had gone such lengths. "Gentlemen," replied the Duke, "you know but little of the rules of Court life. The King gives his opinion without troubling himself to wait till he is asked for it, neither dare I presume to question him as to his dislikes or preferences. Ask M. Nestier, who has supplied His Majesty with from ten to twelve thousand horses, which animal had the good fortune

to be most approved of, and he will answer, 'That he should be greatly at a loss to tell you.'"

All the nobility did not, however, conduct themselves in this affair as ill as the Duc de Richelieu. There was one, the Prince de Beauvau, who, although in complete disgrace, did not shrink from laying the whole truth before the King and telling him that he had been deceived. "Sire," added the Prince, "in the same manner was the religion of your august great-grandfather appealed to upon the nomination of the celebrated La Fontaine; but Louis XIV., when fully convinced of his mistake, revoked his previous refusal."

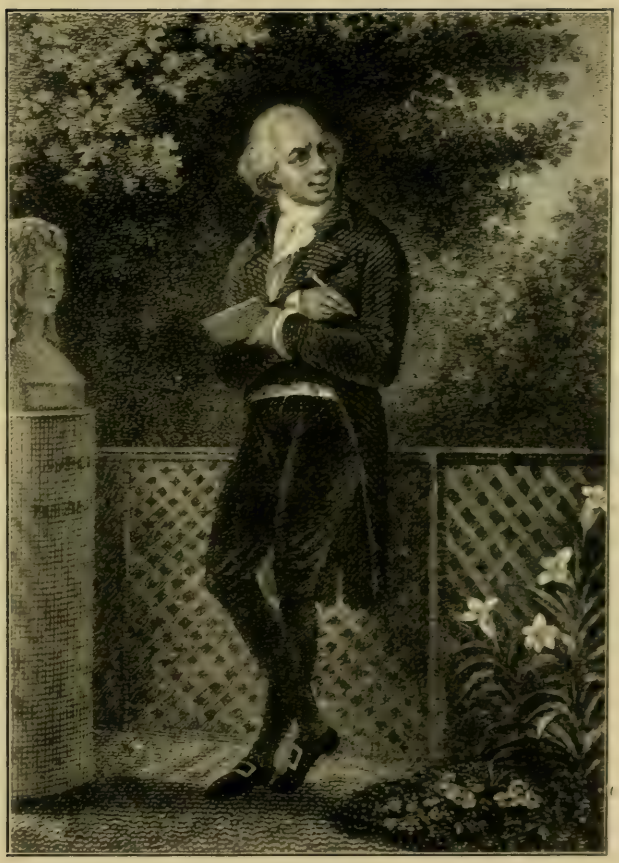
"Yes, yes," replied Louis XV., "my great-grandfather acted very properly, but in the present times a King must not be induced to give way by the clamours of literary men. There are too many frogs already quite prepared to leap upon the log of wood. You perceive that I have not read La Fontaine without remembering how and when to apply him."

Upon the present occasion the Maréchale de Mirepoix brought the Abbé Delille to visit me. He was a little, thin, ugly man, possessing no other personal recommendation than a pair of lively, expressive eyes, and splendid teeth, with a smile of great sweetness, mixed with a degree of archness. I spoke to him kindly of the opposition he had recently experienced.

"I understand, sir," I added, "that you are an Encyclopædist."

"Indeed I am not, madam," he replied; "very far from it."

I was pleased with the frankness of his answer, and as the conversation became more animated, I perceived that the abbé possessed many talents and amiable qualities; and he appeared, although deeply sensible of the blow he had just received, to bear it with modest resignation without affecting the ostentatious display of humble quiescence evinced by M. Suard, who delivered long and formal set speeches respecting his recent failure, and dealt out philosophy by rule and measure. It was, indeed, a matter of



astonishment at Paris how M. Suard had ever been able to gain admittance to the French Academy. Only one reason could ever be advanced by any person—that from the first establishment of the Academy certain seats had been considered as hereditary possessions by persons of mediocre capacity, who had been permitted to succeed each other till the affair had become a matter of right and privilege. Thus the Academy was divided into three classes: that of men of talent and genius, that of men of high rank, and the third composed of a description of persons who could be regarded but as mere nonentities. It must be confessed that this latter class was by far the most numerous, for the two former abundantly supplied it with members.

I know not why I omitted to place the death of the Duc de la Vauguyon at the head of the events of this year. This excellent friend and devoted patron of the Jesuits died suddenly in the month of February of a violent attack of apoplexy. I cannot say his loss particularly distressed me, and when the King heard of it he merely observed, "Well, there is one the less, then, to intrigue for the next vacant place in the Government."

This was the only funeral oration pronounced by the King upon the good Duke. Nevertheless, a thousand sentimentalities were repeated at Court as having been said by His Majesty when eulogising his late well-beloved and trusty servant. At Court all is falsehood and imposition. The extravagant terms which accompanied the announcement of his death greatly amused Louis XV., who brought it to me, and we read it over with considerable amusement several times. It was, indeed, a long string of high-sounding epithets and gratifying titles. Never did I read a more interesting specimen of aristocratic and Jesuitical vanity.

Perhaps, my friend, the little grief I express for the loss of the Duc de la Vauguyon may occasion you some surprise, for you will doubtless recollect that this nobleman was one of the first to recognise me officially as the mistress of the

King. He it was who expedited my presentation. He had, besides, rendered me a number of services. Still, notwithstanding all that, I could not endure him, nor could the lively sense I always retained of his endeavours to promote my interests ever enable me to feel anything like an affection for him. On the other hand, there was a man who, far from seeking to serve me, had done me all the injury in his power, had from my earliest appearance at Court taken part with my enemies, and had even followed them into their exile. Well, this man—this very person—notwithstanding the wrongs he had done me, I began by admiring, till, by insensible degrees, the admiration I felt was converted into the sincerest friendship. Now use your privilege and make as many observations as you will upon the caprice and inconsistency of a woman.

The Prince de Beauvau—for it is of him I am speaking—still continued in disgrace; he had even been deprived of his command of Languedoc without receiving any other in its stead, besides which he was loaded with debts, from which he had no prospect of extricating himself. His sister, Madame de Mirepoix, who was accused of abandoning his cause, adhered to it, on the contrary, with zeal and address. She did not venture openly to attack the King on the subject, but by indirect means she contrived to avail herself of the powerful ascendency her old and tried friendship gave her over the King's mind. She saw that the favourable moment had arrived, and she availed herself of it. We were together in my room one evening at Choisy; we had discussed the merits of the inhabitants of both Court and city, when she caught me by the hand:

"My dear creature," she cried, in a caressing tone, "I wish I could teach you to turn your arms against yourself, for I need your assistance to fight against the King and your very dear self."

"And do you really expect," I said, laughing, "that I should lend you my aid against myself? That would be a novelty in the art of war."

"At least," she said, "you must give me credit for my candour."

"Willingly," I answered. "But, come, let us talk seriously. You know how well I love you, and that, if it be necessary, I am willing to prove it to the whole world, even if I fight against myself, as you propose. But how can I serve you? What is it you would have me do?"

"Put an end to the troubles and embarrassments of a man who is most dear to me."

"Meaning your brother," I said.

"Exactly so," replied the Maréchale. "Does my request offend you?"

"No, my friend," I cried, "not nearly so much as it would shock and displease me were you to forsake him in his misfortunes. Let us consider what can best be done for him."

"You are a dear, good creature!" she exclaimed, embracing me. "You have the heart of a queen."

"All but," I said, and we both laughed heartily at the conceit; after which the good Maréchale explained to me her brother's present forlorn and destitute condition, and obtained my promise of exerting my utmost influence with the King to relieve him from it. Nor did I forget my promise, but availing myself of a moment when His Majesty appeared in most excellent humour, I implored of him to pardon the Prince de Beauvau, and to receive him again into favour."

"You are a most singular woman!" cried Louis XV. "You should rather employ your power in avenging yourself of your enemies."

"I think it more my duty," I answered, "to assemble around Your Majesty all those who are faithfully devoted to your service. Besides, you cannot refuse to do this, for the sake of our excellent Maréchale, who with tears supplicates your pardon for her brother."

"But there is no vacant government to bestow upon the Prince," rejoined Louis XV.

"Meanwhile," I said, "until a vacancy occurs, Your

Majesty can supply the deficiency by a pension of thirty thousand livres."

"I see," answered the King, "that the wisest thing I can do is never to quarrel with anyone, for my reconciliations cost me enormous sums. However, since *you* will have it so, and the Maréchale is so earnest in her petition, I consent to your request."

Two days afterwards the Prince de Beauvau came to call on me with the warmest expressions of thanks and gratitude. Madame de Mirepoix pressed my hand affectionately, saying, "You are the pearl of the Court; all who know you must love you as I do." Whether the Maréchale spoke truly or not I cannot decide, but I think few women in my situation would have evinced so few vindictive feelings. I neither pursued my enemies after the manner of Madame de Châteauroux, nor with the severity and rancour of Madame de Pompadour.

CHAPTER XXIV

A rival—Advice of the Maréchale de Mirepoix—Comte Jean endeavours to divert the King's attention—Dorothée, one of the *élèves* of the Parc-aux-Cerfs—She rejects the King's love—Her lover—Her letter to the Countess—The lover of Dorothée visits the Countess—The story happily concluded.

THE Choiseuls, although exiled, still preserved a large share of power. Their most strenuous efforts were directed to injure me in the King's estimation; but they well knew that the only effectual means of weakening my influence would be to introduce such a mistress as should infallibly rival me in the affections of Louis XV. This step, however, was not quite so easy as was at first imagined, for several reasons I shall not trouble you with, and because an old man, let him possess ever so little natural affection, is not easily weaned from those to whom he has become accustomed. In spite of all these objections, my enemies were busily occupied in seeking a fit object to dispute my ascendency over the Royal mind; but, although they laboured assiduously in the Court and city, in the higher as well as lower grades of society, they were alike unsuccessful.

I experienced, nevertheless, one or two rather violent alarms, arising from the sudden attentions bestowed by the King upon the Princesse de Lamballe. This lady was young, tolerably pretty and vivacious, but destitute of wit and possessed of little or no knowledge of Court life. I really am not sure that she ever thought of such a thing as attracting the notice of the King; all I remember is that I feared she had designs upon him. Chon was for ever remarking, "The Princesse de Lamballe seems a prodigiously great favourite with the King."

My brother-in-law came one morning in a great bustle. "Sister," said he to me, "I have something of importance to say to you. I hear it everywhere whispered that this Savoyard Princess is about to play us a slippery trick; keep your eye well upon her; it will never do to be outgeneralled by her."

Scarcely had Comte Jean quitted me than the Duc d'Aiguillon entered and repeated to me the same advice—if not precisely in similar terms, yet bearing a like meaning. In fact, I heard nothing but a long string of complaints, all ending in the same strain—"beware."

I enquired of the Maréchale de Mirepoix what was her opinion—whether any danger really existed. "Indeed, my dear," she replied, "I find it so impossible to decide that I can only say that it may and it may not. Still, I would have you remember how greatly the residence of Madame de Lamballe with the Dauphiness, by affording His Majesty greater facilities of being in her company, increases the evil we dread. Your rival belongs to a good and popular family, and the whole Castle would view her power over the heart of Louis XV. with complacency. Remember Madame de Soissons and Louis XIV. Upon my word, it is worth your close attention. We all know that the King would never object to variety in his mistresses, and only dreads a change of habits and customs. I promised you I would warn you of any peril that threatened, and I now fulfil my engagement, for the danger is at hand."

These words tormented me more than all the forebodings and anticipations of those around me. I lost no time in summoning my chief counsellor, Comte Jean. This man (to whose aid I had always recourse in any case of sudden emergency), in appearance so frivolous, and who frittered away his time in all manner of insignificant amusements, was a most excellent adviser, and more than a match for the most scheming courtier about the Palace. To him I repeated the words of the Maréchale, requesting he would point out what was best to be done. He reflected for some minutes with an air of comic gravity; then suddenly exclaimed:

"Suppose we start a young doe from the Parc-aux-Cerfs."

"Surely," replied I, "the remedy would be worse than the disease."

"Not at all, my dear sister. You cannot draw any comparison between the Princesse de Lamballe and a young girl whose humble birth and ignorance of the world will effectually dispel your alarms of any ambitious ideas inducing her to aspire to that sovereign power so justly your own. Where would she find persons to support and maintain her interests? No, she would merely hold her situation so long as it suited you to suffer her; and when you desired her dismissal, it would be done. Meanwhile, give yourself no uneasiness, nor meddle at all with the business, but suffer me to conduct both the attack and defence."

I easily perceived that to do so would be my best plan; nevertheless, I could not forbear saying:

"I appear to be in precisely the same predicament in which the Marquise de Pompadour was placed."

"To be sure," answered Comte Jean. "In accepting her post you must expect to be burdened with the various duties appertaining thereto. Come, come, sister, no false shame; this is merely a harmless sort of *ruse de guerre*. Let us proceed boldly. But, first, you must give me full power to treat with Madame."

I immediately furnished Comte Jean with a sort of letter of credit, with which he took his leave; whilst I remained like a simpleton, nursing my ill-humour, and forming a thousand schemes for the downfall of the dangerous Princesse de Lamballe, whom I would gladly have sent to the remotest corner of the earth.

When Comte Jean presented himself at the Parc-aux-Cerfs, the governor of this sacred retreat was greatly alarmed and even refused to grant him admission; but at the sight of my writing the inflexible gaoler began to relax, and at length consented to conduct him to the presence of Madame. Having made known the purport of his mission, the lady informed him that he came at a propitious moment, for that she had then three *élèves* ready for presentation—Josephine de M——,

a young lady of quality; Linette, a Flemish girl; and a native of Auvergne, named Dorothée. My brother-in-law objected to the first on account of her birth, but Dorothée was precisely what he sought for. She had just attained her eighteenth year, was exceedingly beautiful, and, still better for our purpose, was considered very simple. I forget whether I told you that it was the custom at the Parc-aux-Cerfs to give to each of the *élèves* a portrait of the King in order to prepare them for seeing him. In the same manner, the portraits of the young creatures who composed this establishment were shown to the King, in order to determine his choice. Comte Jean selected the last portrait which had been taken of Dorothée, and returned to the Castle furnished with what he described as a preservative against the charms of Madame de Lamballe.

Lebel, as you know, was dead; and the vile slanderers of the day declared that I had poisoned him. I need not refute so base a charge by reminding you, my friend, that I did not thus requite the services of those to whom I was so greatly indebted. Lebel died because Death, that great despoiler of the human race, spares not even the favourite valets of kings. He was succeeded by Chamilly, a good-natured and officious sort of person, who agreed with all parties and quarrelled with none. This excellent M. Chamilly wished to enjoy all the prerogatives of his predecessor, and loudly complained that he was restricted from all interference with the management of the Parc-aux-Cerfs.

Upon the return of Comte Jean to the Castle, he went in search of this important personage, saying:

"Chamilly, you must convey this snuff-box to the King."

"How beautiful!" exclaimed the supple valet, as he fixed his eyes upon the portrait; "but, surely, you would not wish to introduce such a formidable candidate."

"My good friend," answered Comte Jean, "just listen to a little common sense; 'tis all I ask of you. The original of this charming miniature dwells in a neighbouring establishment, of which Lebel formerly had the superintendence."

"Yes," cried Chamilly, with warmth, "a superintendence

which is denied me, although I have done nothing to merit the affront. I presume my fidelity is suspected."

"By no means, my worthy friend," returned Comte Jean; "on the contrary, your principles and ability are so well and properly estimated that you are chosen to assist in the present affair. You may already perceive how seducingly lovely is the fair original of this picture; but, that you may be the better assured of it, you shall see her. Remember, we all wish you well at present, and are anxious to promote your interests; but if you fail in obtaining for this charming creature the King's most ardent admiration we shall never pardon you or seek to serve you more."

Chamilly had wit, although it frequently suited his purpose to conceal it, that he might not give offence to others. He comprehended wonderfully well what we wished him to do, and hastily visiting the Parc-aux-Cerfs, returned perfectly dazzled with the beauty of Dorothée, whose miniature he contrived that same evening to place in His Majesty's way.

Louis XV., who was a great connoisseur in beauty, hastily enquired where the original of so lovely a painting was to be met with. The obsequious Chamilly replied that His Majesty had only to enquire at the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and he would meet with her. The King gave one more look at the portrait, and then announced his intention of visiting the Parc-aux-Cerfs. We knew nothing of Dorothée, and had imagined her weak and easily led; but we were in error. She was certainly modest and timid, but endowed with a powerful and fearless disposition, which was not to be intimidated or restrained; besides this, she had a lover, who, after having been long separated from her, had at last discovered her in the Parc-aux-Cerfs. How he ever made his way into a house so strictly and carefully guarded I never knew. Suffice it that he did gain admittance, and obtained in the stillness of the night many interviews with the object of his affections. The intrepid Dorothée, who contrived to meet her lover in the gardens which surrounded her prison, first learned from his lips that she was an in-

habitant of that wretched place set apart for the education of those unfortunate beings destined for the temporary gratification of the King of France; and the same instant which opened the eyes of the innocent girl to the true nature of her situation witnessed the fervent vow with which she pledged herself never to yield to the splendid infamy prepared for her, nor to falsify the affection she had so long and faithfully cherished for the beloved of her heart.

I will now proceed with my narration. Louis XV. repaired without delay to the Parc-aux-Cerfs, attired as a mere man of business, but at the first glance of his noble and handsome countenance, Dorothée recognised her Sovereign, before whom she stood confused and speechless. The King mistook her emotion for sudden admiration, and began to address her in the language of love; but, falling at his feet, "Sire," cried she, "you are known to me. I entreat your mercy and pardon for speaking thus boldly. You have many virtues; deign to respect mine. I am here by constraint, and when I was brought hither I knew not the fate reserved for me; it is far too great and dazzling for my poor wishes; I am not worthy to aspire so high, and ask only to be restored to my liberty."

Louis XV. was but little prepared for such a scene, and possibly it was the first refusal he had ever experienced within the walls of the Parc-aux-Cerfs. He sought in vain to overcome the objection of Dorothée, but finding her immovably fixed in her resolution he returned home in extreme ill-humour.

No sooner had the King entered his apartment than he vented the full torrent of his rage upon poor Chamilly, who was anxiously awaiting the result of his master's visit to the Parc-aux-Cerfs. Chamilly immediately flew to complain of the treatment he had received to Comte Jean; Comte Jean hastened to lecture Madame upon the want of proper management exhibited by her *élèves*; and Madame flew in a rage to acquaint the trembling Dorothée that, as a fit reward for her presumptuous conduct towards the King, she should be for ever confined within the walls of a cloister.

Terrible indeed did this news sound to the poor girl, who lost no time in acquainting her lover with what had transpired. He suddenly recollected having heard me frequently mentioned as interposing between many innocent persons and the punishment they would otherwise have incurred, and, judging by his own feelings, he concluded that the idea of a rival must be as disagreeable to me as it was to himself. Accordingly they decided upon addressing a letter to me, and both confidently reckoned upon my assistance if once they could acquaint me with their case.

The following morning I was at my toilette, when Henriette announced to me that a good-looking young man with somewhat of a provincial air was earnestly entreating permission to speak to me. I desired he might be admitted. The lover of Dorothée (for it was no other) advanced, it is true, with an awkward and somewhat embarrassed manner, but at the same time with a frankness and confidence which greatly pleased and interested me. As he timidly glanced towards me I perceived that he was terribly agitated, and I bestowed on him one of my most encouraging smiles to reassure him. He then presented me with a letter, which I opened, and saw with astonishment that it was dated from the Parc-aux-Cerfs. The following is a copy of the letter, which I have carefully preserved:

"MADAM,—A poor and unfortunate girl presumes to address you, who alone, of all persons in the world, have the power of changing her present melancholy fate. You are said to be good and generous; be not, then, insensible to the earnest entreaties of her who now implores your aid and assistance.

"A powerful monarch, who should prefer you to all others, has deigned to cast his eyes on me. I have dared to refuse the flattering homage paid me because it is due to you only, and because my heart has long since been bestowed on another. Yes, madam, before the period of my being taken from my friends (honest citizens of Auvergne), I had pledged my love and faith to him who will bring this letter; and I repeat that, despite the vast honour shown me by His Majesty, I would not for all the empires in the world prove unfaithful to one whose fidelity and affection are only equalled by my own.

"I am informed that His Majesty is greatly incensed with my refusal. Alas! what will become of me should you refuse me your powerful succour and protection? Condescend, dear madam, to help a young and inexperienced creature, whose every hope of escaping her present sad situation

rests with you. I hear that you are beautiful as the spirits above. O that your goodness may equally resemble theirs!

"The husband of my choice will present you with this letter. May heaven move you to compassionate his distress and mine; and may he find you favourable to the prayers of

"Your respectful but wretched suppliant,

"DOROTHÉE."

You can scarcely imagine, my friend, the mingled feelings and conflicting emotions which filled my mind during the perusal of this artless epistle. Here was a young and helpless girl soliciting my interest to escape from the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and it was I, the mistress of the King, the very person on whom her innocence relied for assistance, who had sought, by throwing her in the King's way, as a temporary gratification, to wean him from a more formidable rival! I knew not on what to resolve. In this dilemma I again had recourse to my counsel-extraordinary, Comte Jean. The young man still remained in the room. When my brother-in-law had hastily glanced over the letter, he exclaimed:

"Upon my word, this is a most singular affair!"

"Sir," said I to the desponding lover, "it appears by this letter that the writer of it has no taste for the high destiny which is presented for her acceptance."

"No, madam," he answered, quickly; "none at all. Educated in the bosom of simplicity, she asks but to be restored to the arms of her parents."

"And to you likewise, if I mistake not," I said.

"Ah! madam," exclaimed the young man, "we have loved each other from our childhood."

"Mercy upon me!" Comte Jean cried, with a malicious smile; "you date your loves tolerably far back. But does your future bride know the value of the lover she so hastily rejects?"

"Yes, yes!" replied the agitated youth, "she knows it well. But then we have loved each other so long."

"And you, yourself," interrupted Comte Jean; "are you aware that there is not a lover or a husband in the Castle who would not——"

I stopped my brother-in-law just as he was about to enter

more fully into the system of a courtier's morality, for, once engaged on the subject, he knew not where to leave off; and, addressing myself to the trembling lover, I enquired:

"And how, sir, did you discover the retreat of your mistress—how manage to procure an interview with her?"

"Ah! madam," he replied, still harping on the same string, "we have loved each other since we were children."

I can scarcely describe to you, my friend, how much I was charmed with this simple, yet discreet, mode of reply.

"Really," cried Comte Jean, starting up from his arm-chair, "there is no replying to such an argument as that."

"Madam," exclaimed the young man, in the most supplicating tone, "will you forsake us in our misfortune? Will you not pity us?"

"My friend," I answered, "you and your mistress have greatly interested me. I will be your friend, and you shall ere long have proof of the sincerity of my intentions. Be prudent, and to-morrow shall restore to you your beloved Dorothée."

Scarcely had I pronounced these words than the happy lover was at my feet, kissing my hands, which he bathed with his tears. Meanwhile Comte Jean sat afar off, contemplating the scene, and murmuring between his teeth, "Where will virtue find her way next?" The Count could never comprehend the preference for virtue to riches, nor believe that anyone cared particularly for being the exclusive possessor of wife or mistress. For his own part, he looked upon both as mere bills of exchange, which assumed a fresh value with every new signature.

When I was alone with Comte Jean, I enquired what was best to be done now we had engaged ourselves to these deserving people.

"The best plan, in my opinion," he answered, "is to send away this silly creature, who would fain observe a vow of chastity within the precincts of the Parc-aux-Cerfs. I should fear lest she might spread her doctrines of celibacy till they became epidemic. What an amazing rage will Madame be in

when she finds that a mere country wench had dared to prefer a clown to our *Frerot!*"

"And well she may," I said; "but, nevertheless, this poor girl must not be sent home destitute."

"Certainly not," returned Comte Jean. "The nymphs of the Parc-aux-Cerfs should be as well rewarded as those of other places equally convenient; and I should say she is entitled to the usual sum given when the *élèves* quit the establishment, with the diamonds, &c., belonging to them."

"My dear brother-in-law," I cried, "there are some excellent points about you."

"You flatter me, sister. Nevertheless, that I may merit your good opinion, I will go at once to arrange everything with Madame and Chamilly, and also the Duc de la Vrillière."

"No, no!" I said, "leave me to deal with the latter. I cannot trust him; he might favour us with one of his tricks upon this occasion—that is to say, either some act of stupidity or knavery."

My brother-in-law now took his leave, and I resumed my toilette. I was in the happiest spirits. I forget the name of the writer who asserts that nothing so cools and refreshes the blood as the consciousness of having avoided the commission of some act of folly; and for my own part, having no intention of writing a moral essay, I can truly declare that nothing is so conducive to health as the performance of a good action.

I had despatched a summons to the fat little Duke, who soon arrived, hot and out of breath. I took him aside, and related the affair to him, without letting him know my intentions. When I had finished he clasped his hands and exclaimed, in the most theatrical manner:

"Good heavens! what do I hear? What contumacy! Permit me to retire, madam, whilst I give immediate orders for expediting the *lettres de cachet*."

"What *lettres de cachet* can you possibly mean, M. le Duc?" I enquired.

"What can I mean, madam?" he cried. "Surely you cannot doubt my zeal! One for the girl who has thus

abused the Royal preference, one for her paramour, and one for each of those who have been concerned in the intrigue."

"My dear Duke," I said, smiling, "your friendship carries you away. Who talked of imprisoning any of these people?"

"Madam, it is the custom upon such occasions."

"Then let me tell you it is a very improper and unfair custom. Listen to me, sir; this girl must be removed from the establishment."

"Certainly, madam; by a *lettre de cachet*."

"Not so, my excellent friend," I replied; "but with an order for a marriage portion on Beaujon, in order that she may retire into the country and be silent as to all that has occurred."

"But the young man," cried the Duke, "whose sacrilegious audacity calls loudly for punishment—a *lettre de cachet*."

"If you deprive him of his liberty they cannot be married. I must apprise you that I have taken this youthful couple under my protection, and I cannot have their happiness interfered with. Remember that, if the slightest ill befalls them, it is you, my dear Duke, I shall hold responsible for it, and you know I do not easily forget such obligations."

The Duke, who perfectly understood my meaning, offered no further opposition; but, by way of giving one little trait of character and exercising still the functions of his office, he said to me:

"Do you not consider, madam, that the sooner this marriage takes place the better?"

"Certainly, my dear Duke; I am quite of that opinion."

"Then, with your permission, I will forward to the curé of St. Louis a *lettre de cachet*, that he may instantly perform the ceremony."

At these words I could scarcely refrain from laughing in the face of the *Petit Saint*, as the Duc de la Vrillière was called. The Duke, however, paid no attention to me; but, filled with impatience to expedite his *lettre de cachet*, he took his leave.

When the King next visited me he appeared quite confused and ashamed of his prank.

"Sire," I said to him, "you have been somewhat gay lately."

"Yes," he said, affecting to smile, "but I have been an unsuccessful wooer."

"Well, but what are you going to do with your little rebel?" I enquired.

Louis XV. was silent for a moment, and then answered.

"Would not the best way be to send her to a convent?"

"And why so?" I cried.

"For the ridiculous figure she has made me cut. If she recovers her liberty she will repeat all that has passed, and there will be a universal outcry against me throughout Auvergne. Under similar circumstances the Marquise de Pompadour would not have waited for my commands on the subject."

"Tranquillise yourself," I replied. "The surest way to prevent these young people from speaking ill of you is to load them with benefits. I have already arranged everything. Let the poor girl marry the youth of her heart, and bestow upon her the usual marriage dowry, the jewels and clothes given upon such occasions."

"Well, be it so," Louis XV. answered; "but, in my opinion, half the customary portion would be sufficient for the present instance."

I made no reply to this last attempt to economise, but arranged the whole affair according to my own inclinations, and had every reason to be satisfied with the result.

The nuptial ceremony took place without further delay, thanks to the intervention of the fat little Duke. I soon received a visit from my *protégés*, to whom I recommended the strictest secrecy and discretion; and both Dorothée and her husband vowed the most inviolable silence. I must not omit telling you that Madame was perfectly furious with all this. She no longer fancied herself secure in her post, but discharged her servants indiscriminately, in the fear of having traitors and accomplices in the house, while the hatred she

henceforward bore to the class from which poor Dorothée had sprung increased daily.

After the termination of the affair, Comte Jean observed:

"All this is vastly well; but Dorothée is gone, and Madame de Lamballe remains as dangerous an enemy as ever."

"Why not go once more, my excellent brother," I replied, "and try your fortune in the Parc-aux-Cerfs."

"And you may depend upon it, if I do, I will not be caught a second time; and the girl of quality shall be the holocaust."

"Do as you please," I answered. "I promise you I will not again interfere."

Comte Jean resumed the road towards the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and managed so well that His Majesty wholly forgot, in the society of a young and lovely creature taken from its shelter, all the fascinations of the Princesse de Lamballe; and I had no occasion to provoke the scene with Louis XV., in which those who invented it assert that I drew down upon myself the disagreeable reply recorded most falsely by the pamphleteers of the day.[1] The truth was, the many who envied my power gave vent to their splenetic feelings by calumniating me. This was, in my opinion, a very inadequate compensation; but they were content with it, and so was I.

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1 It was asserted that the Comtesse du Barri, enquiring of Louis XV. if it were true that he contemplated a marriage with the Princesse de Lamballe, was answered, "Indeed, I might choose much worse."—EDITOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER XXV

The physicians conspire against Madame du Barri — Quesnay — Lamartinière—Comte Jean and his mistress—Quarrel amongst the ministers—The Princesse de Kinski—Mademoiselle Guimard at the house of Madame du Barri—The prostitutes of Paris—Mademoiselle Fleuri and her child—M. de Ségur, the godfather—The Archbishop of Toulouse and the demoiselles Verrières—Madame du Barri at the house of Mademoiselle Guimard—The Comte de Lauraguais.

ALTHOUGH my fears were over with respect to the Princesse de Lamballe, I had to maintain another attack on the part of my enemies. They had won over Dr. Quesnay, first physician to His Majesty. This man, who had been entirely devoted to Madame de Pompadour, could not endure me (for no other reason than because I had succeeded his late patroness), and intrigued against me purely for his amusement. Never could I have imagined that one who was a philosopher, an Encyclopædist, and, still more, head of the economists, could have entertained so mortal a dislike to a woman. Quesnay was systematically malicious, and, disguising the bitterness of his hatred beneath the appearance of an abrupt, frank manner, had the skill to pass himself off as a good sort of man, to my exceeding annoyance. He had secured in his interest M. Lamartinière, head surgeon, who resembled him in more than one particular. He was continually saying the coarsest things to the King, and both he and his friend Quesnay went about saying that the health of His Majesty required the greatest care and management, and that it was a great pity to see him urged on by me to commit excesses too great even for a young man.

However, I had among the faculty some friends who

warmly defended me, and at the head of that number I place the learned Dr. Bordeu, my physician, a man of excellent sense and judgment, who smiled at the alarms of his brethren and turned the laugh against themselves. This was aiding my cause essentially. In return, I was very anxious to procure the appointment of Bordeu as first physician to the King. The post had been vacant since the death of Senac, the last who held the title, as far as I know. Quesnay went through the duties of the situation without being regularly installed in it, and, although I could not invest Bordeu with the distinction of physician to His Majesty, I yet prevented Quesnay from bearing that appellation.

Comte Jean was of incalculable service to me in this species of warfare. He forgot his affairs where mine were concerned, or, rather, he had the good sense to perceive that his interests must ever be involved in mine; and I can assure you that his gasconading wit had fine sport when opposed to the *brusquerie* of Quesnay and the coarseness of Lamartinière. Poor Comte Jean! it was well that his uniform attachment and steady devotion to my fortunes made me overlook his prodigious losses at play and his profligacy of life. He was indeed a singular creature. He played the grand seignior to perfection, and kept both his mistress and his establishment upon the same scale of profuse expense.

His present mistress was a beautiful girl, whom he had brought with him from Languedoc, and whom he introduced everywhere under the name of Madame de Murat. This favourite, as silly as she was unprincipled, did him infinite mischief by the vulgarity of her manners and the extravagance of her habits. Money ran through her fingers like water; she was extremely presuming and insolent—not towards me, certainly (for I never would see her), but to all those who sought the favour or protection of my brother-in-law. She gave herself the airs and, what was still worse, the title of my sister-in-law with a cool assurance that made me smile. My real sisters-in-law, Chon

and Bischi, whom she perpetually abused, avoided her as they would have done the plague.

Comte Jean carried her with him to the waters of Spa. There she committed a thousand follies, and returned in the most complete ill-humour, because she had met with no woman who would visit her. When they quitted Spa, she carried her excesses so far that her protector himself discovered that they exceeded all bounds, and sought only to free himself from her. Fortune threw in his way a man of quality, a chevalier de St. Louis, who by some singular coincidence bore the same name as the shameless creature I have been speaking of. The Comte de Murat was very desirous of recruiting his shattered fortunes, and accordingly feigned a violent attachment for Madame de Murat, so that Comte Jean, seeing him so deeply smitten, could do no less than propose his Dulcinea for his friend's acceptance. Comte de Murat would have espoused the daughter of Satan to answer his purpose. You may be sure, therefore, he did not refuse Madame de Murat. But he attached certain considerations as a gentleman of family and military fame; and, certainly, if he tarnished the pure bood of his ancestry by an alliance somewhat below them, his wounded pride was quickly healed by means of a golden plaster.

To complete the scandal of the thing, and that nothing might be wanting to stamp the newly-found husband with shame, Comte Jean himself conducted the fête given in honour of the nuptials, which were celebrated with the utmost splendour, my brother-in-law himself giving away the bride. Comte Jean knew well that it was the King who paid the piper, and that it did not become him to act shabbily with His Majesty's money. This marriage was the subject of much conversation. All Paris exclaimed against Comte Jean and, by a sort of natural impulse, against me at the same time. I wished to complain of this, and my brother-in-law grew angry with me; in fact, it was the occasion of a severe quarrel between us; nor was it until my sisters-in-law had negotiated and mediated with persevering industry between us that a reconciliation was effected.

I profited by this opportunity to secure myself for the future from any claim which my marriage contract, drawn up after the custom of Paris, might give to my husband over my person or property. I owed this service to the Chancellor Maupeou, who rendered it at the very time that, deceived by the Duc d'Aiguillon, I became upon terms of enmity with him. I will relate to you some further particulars of this quarrel, and the political events of the same year, when I have finished speaking of the family of my trusted and well-beloved husband. Amongst other atrocious calumnies, a rumour was circulated of my having poisoned poor Comte Guillaume. This piece of malice, overstrained as it was, made me very unhappy. When Comte Guillaume was about to set out for Toulouse, I requested him to continue at Paris, and to appear as much as suited his inclinations in the gay world. When every person who knew anything of Comte Guillaume saw him eating like an ogre, drinking like a templar, and looking the picture of health, it can hardly be supposed I had any hand in his death. This is sufficient of my own affairs.

The Chancellor held possession of the King's ear. Louis XV. seemed every day to retain a more grateful recollection of his having freed him from his former Parliaments and given him a more manageable and obsequious one. I have already told you that, above all things, the King best loved his ease and tranquillity, and felt the most lively displeasure against all who disturbed his peaceful enjoyment of it. He was angry with the magistracy because they had worn him out with long and continued opposition; and because he suspected, with some reason, that they had rendered him unpopular with his people. His affection for the Chancellor was precisely that which arose from the remembrance of his having successfully combated his enemies and freed him from the necessity of personally chastising them. But the superior favour and preference evinced by the King for M. de Maupeou was viewed with mingled feelings of envy and hatred by the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Abbé Terray, and, jealous of his growing power, they deter

mined to put a stop to his further progress in the King's regard. They then proceeded to carry their design into execution in the following manner: When M. de Maupeou sought to destroy the Parliaments he was compelled to acknowledge that, in spite of his energy and talent, he should never be able to accomplish this great work if he did not previously secure the co-operation of the clergy—not the bishops of France, but the heads of parties, such as the Pope's Nuncio; M. de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris; Cardinal de la Roche Aymon, Grand Almoner of France; and all others of similar sentiments. To effect so desirable a coalition M. de Maupeou did not hesitate to promise the suppression of the decree of 1762, which declared every work issuing from the Court of Rome should be accounted without value until it had undergone the examination of Parliament, after which it might be registered if that body approved of its contents. Now, as the zealots of the day felt this restriction as a particularly heavy grievance, the hopes of procuring its suppression drew them around the Chancellor, whose plan they aided with their best interest, and, as we have seen, the Sovereign courts speedily disappeared.

This great victory achieved, the clergy, who had been instrumental in it, demanded of the Chancellor the fulfilment of his promise; and he, fearing to offend them, was compelled to act honestly in spite of his natural disinclination, and accordingly drew up a declaration abrogating the decree of 1762, not doubting but that the new Parliament, so obsequious and yielding, would readily approve of both the declaration and registering. The poor Chancellor, however, reckoned without his host.

No sooner did the enemies of M. de Maupeou obtain a hint of his design than they despatched their emissaries into the country. They explained to the new Parliament that by yielding in the present instance they would only fall into general odium and disrepute, whereas, by maintaining the independence of the Crown, they would, in all probability, raise themselves greatly in the opinion of the whole nation. The members saw clearly that this reasoning had truth in it.

They discussed the matter among themselves, took their measures, and, at the very moment when their patron and protector reckoned upon their ready compliance, they began a long strain of remonstrances.

This was a hard blow to M. de Maupeou, who sought to ward it off through the influence of the King; but here again he found formidable opponents in the Comte de Fuentes and the Marquis de Caraccioli—the former an ambassador from Spain, and the latter from Naples—who, supported by the Abbé Terray and the Duc de Choiseul, apprised the King that to repeal the edict of 1762 would be a violation of the family compact. They further managed so well with His Majesty that Louis XV. decided in favour of the Parliament, and M. de Maupeou, finding his defeat inevitable, was compelled to withdraw the offensive declaration.

It was under these disastrous circumstances that my cousin the Chancellor endeavoured to reinstate himself in my good graces by endeavouring to ingratiate himself into the favour of Mademoiselle du Barri, for which purpose he lavished the most elegant and gallant attention upon my sister-my-law Chon, who, woman-like, was caught by the wily flattery of the assiduous M. de Maupeou, whose defence she from this period most warmly espoused, and plainly convinced me that if I entirely quarrelled with the crafty object of her patronage it must be at the expense of *her* friendship likewise.

These intrigues were far from amusing or interesting to me, who attached but little importance to decrees, declarations and registerings; indeed, it was irksome to me to hear anything about them; but still, it was a misery from which I could not escape, for the ministers, who carried on their deliberations and discussed the most important questions in my presence, would insist upon having my advice and opinion on whatever they undertook. Whether I liked it or not, I was compelled, in imitation of Madame de Pompadour, to turn politician; yet I can honestly assure you, my friend, that to have employed the time thus consumed in listening to dry and uninteresting details in pursuing the frivolities

of fashion would have suited both my taste and habits much better.

For instance, I was a great adept in the newly-invented employment of *unravelling* (*parfilant*). You have very possibly forgotten that fashionable folly, which has passed away like so many others, and probably at the time when these papers may be perused by your children, they may find it difficult to comprehend what amusement their grandmothers could have found in losing their time separating from the silk on which it was twisted, the gold thread of fringes, gold laces, tassels, &c. It is true that the precious metal thus obtained by the labour of so many delicate fingers was sold for the profit of the fair workwomen, and very considerable sums were thus obtained.

Parfilage had indeed become a perfect mania. We all employed ourselves with it, and our lovers, as well as those who aspired at becoming such—those who wished well to us or had need of our services—all supplied us with materials for *parfilant*. It was a fine opportunity for such as wished to evince their gallantry. Work-baskets, lambs, children's chairs, dolls' beds, and a crowd of similar trifles covered with gold fringes and tassels, were given and accepted with mutual good-feeling. These pretty articles were looked at and admired during the first twenty-four hours, after which the scissors were taken up, and the charming gift was cut and slashed till the last thread was unravelled.

The King presented me with a rosewood work-table, ornamented with medallions of the richest Sèvres china, and covered with a cloth, three times double, of the thickest golden stuff. The Duc d'Aiguillon sent me an enormous sheep loaded with the precious material for *parfilage*. The Duc de Duras begged my acceptance of six of the prettiest little cabriolets ever seen; and in spite of my late disagreement with the Chancellor, he forced on my acceptance, through the intervention of Chon, a figure of Punch of the natural size, completely dressed in the richest gold laces. The Duc d'Ayen could not let pass so favourable an opportunity of saying a few smart things upon a Chancellor of France thus presenting the image of Folly.

The rage for *parfilage* was equally strong in the city as at Court; it was indeed a perfect epidemic, propagated by the vanity of the one sex and the cupidity of the other. For my own part I was soon weary of it, and I saw too little of female society to have been induced by example to continue it. I believe, indeed, that it held but a short reign and was quickly displaced by some new whim—I forget precisely what.

I have just remarked that I saw but few females; indeed, since my establishment at Court the circle of my acquaintances had not increased. Either I was studiously avoided or else I refused on my own part all overtures coming from those who either wished to injure or supplant me, or were willing to become my friends from mercenary motives. I remember a Princesse de Kinski, a Pole by marriage and a Hungarian by birth. She was a large and beautiful woman, although somewhat coarse and masculine from her excessive size. Bold and daring in her disposition, she was endured merely from her rank and riches. She was fond of pleasure, and to that I had no objection; but she presumed to lay her schemes for attracting the King's admiration, and to that I had a vast objection.

The Maréchale de Mirepoix told me that, being one evening at supper at the house of the Maréchale de Luxembourg, in company with Mesdames de Boufflers, de Lauzun, de Cambis, and de Senneterre, the Princesse de Kinski had asserted that I only continued to hold possession of the King's heart by not suffering any other female to approach him. "I would wager a trifle," the Princess also remarked, "that if I were admitted into the familiarity of friendship with the Comtesse du Barri I would plague her handsomely."

Shortly after this the modest De Kinski requested to be permitted to visit me. I caused her to be informed that, being out of health and suffering with an affection of the lungs, I was prevented from seeing any additional visitors. It was true that, towards the close of the winter, I had had a very severe cold, for which I had been bled twice in one day; but I was perfectly restored to health when the Polish Princess made her perfidious advances to me, and the delicacy

of my chest was merely a pretext for avoiding her company. Do not imagine that I stood in fear of her, far from it. I dreaded only her vulgar air and unpleasant manners, and thought, with justice, that the King would be rather dissatisfied at finding me in her company than happy of the opportunity of seeing her at my house.

Before I proceed to speak of Compiègne and Fontainebleau, and even previously to my relating several new and interesting particulars relative to the partition of Poland, which took place this year, or the reconciliation of the *protesting* Princes with the Court, I must relate to you a scrape I was silly enough to get into. It might have been very prejudicial to my interests, and would certainly have proved highly detrimental had I been discovered. Do not form a still worse opinion of me, I entreat, from what I am about to relate, but listen and judge.

Mademoiselle Guimard continued to keep up a delightful establishment. She had just quitted a house she had hitherto occupied to take up her abode in an hotel situated in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. This hotel was a perfect palace of pleasures, and its mistress the queen of it, and she acquitted herself towards her visitors with a grace and elegance worthy her high fame and repute. Here were to be found at her soirées, and particularly at the dramatic representations given in her own private theatre, the most fashionable society from the gay world. The most superior actors, singers and dancers from the different theatres rendered the spectacle very attractive; and not unfrequently females of the highest distinction were present at these plays, but partly concealed by latticed boxes. I had formerly been very intimate with Mademoiselle Guimard, but at the period of my own elevation I quarrelled with her in consequence of some silly act on the part of the Prince de Soubise, who was as noted for his want of tact at Court as when at the head of an army. Nevertheless, when I had sufficiently vented my anger upon my old friend, I began to reproach myself with having treated her too severely and haughtily. These kindly feelings being conveyed to her either by M. de Laborde, M. de Soubise, or some of her

admirers, I knew not exactly which, I one morning received from her an ill-written letter, in which Mademoiselle Guimard entreated of me to grant her half an hour's conversation. I returned her a favourable answer, for, to confess the truth, I was tired of my noble friends at Court, and would willingly have exchanged their society for that of one with whom I could talk of days long since gone by.

Accordingly Mademoiselle came to pay the promised visit. I received her as an old and esteemed friend. She seemed highly gratified with her reception, and, seating herself beside me, quickly entered into an animated conversation, in which she occasionally employed phrases not admissible in the apartments of Versailles and expressions which would have been rejected in the most humble sphere of life; and the dancer, who in her own drawing-room was the silliest, most fastidious and affected of all persons in her profession, finding that such an assumption of manner would not impose upon me, threw off the mask and showed herself as she really was, amiable, communicative and unaffected. We talked of the past, and I enquired news of such or such a one. She recollected all I wished to know, and sometimes her memory supplied her with more particulars than I cared to remember. Of everything of a scandalous nature she appeared more than commonly retentive. Not one tale of gallantry, not an intrigue, whether successful or otherwise, had escaped her recollection, and in the course of a few minutes she had given me an abstract of the fate and fortunes of each of my old companions.

But Mademoiselle Guimard was far from happy. Her three acknowledged lovers—the Prince de Soubise, M. de Laborde, and an Englishman, whose barbarous name has escaped my memory—allowed her in all scarcely 200,000 livres per annum. She made an additional 50,000 livres by one lucky assignation and another, but still, as she expended nearly double the amount of her yearly income, it may easily be believed that she was always in difficulties. For instance, to account for her present embarrassments, there was the splendid hotel she had just

caused to be built; then she had her theatre to support, her household expenses, her stables, where were kept never less than twenty horses; add to these her own personal expenditure and the sums laid out in little presents to her dearest friends, and you will have a hard heart if you do not pity her for her confined income, so ill according with her spirit of princely magnificence.

"My dear friend," I said, when I had patiently listened to her long account of troubles and difficulties, "I will see whether I cannot persuade the King to do something for you. You shall dance in a ballet which is to form part of an entertainment I am preparing for His Majesty. He will be sure to admire you, and I will avail myself of that opportunity to slip in a word about your present difficulties. He cannot do less than present me with a good sum of money for you."

Mademoiselle Guimard knew not what answer to return that might suitably express her gratitude. She endeavoured to excuse her many and great expenses; but how could it, as she said, be otherwise? She was compelled to receive at her house the first noblemen of the Court, and it was requisite that she should give them an honourable reception, added to which she was frequently called upon to entertain foreigners of distinction, and, for the credit of the French nation, it was incumbent on her to prevent their associating any but liberal ideas with their recollections of Paris.

After having sufficiently discussed affairs of a serious nature, we returned to lighter themes, and I enquired of her what had become of Duthé, a beautiful, fair girl, who was a general favourite with the lordlings of the time for the ease and dexterity with which she managed to dissipate the most enormous sums. She still carried on the old game. Since that period Duthé has twice been employed in the Royal Family—first, in completing the education of the Duc de Bourbon, and subsequently, in perfecting that of the most amiable of our grandsons.

But the recent adventure of Mademoiselle de la Fleury

appeared the most to interest Mademoiselle Guimard. At that period Mademoiselle de la Fleury was as beautiful as an angel, but possessed of the malice of a fiend. At the head of her admirers stood the Prince de Nassau, who treated her like a brute and paid her like a profligate—that is to say, very badly. It happened one day that Mademoiselle de la Fleury took it into her head to become the mother of a little son. The Prince de Nassau was absent, but the infant was with justice set down to his account, and baptised by the name of Nassau, M. de Ségur being godfather and Mademoiselle Arnould the godmother. So far, so well; but the Prince, on his return, denied all right and title to the little one thus thrust upon his acceptance, and instituted an action against his mistress. This affair roused all the frail sisterhood of Paris. They looked upon the case of Mademoiselle de la Fleury as their own, and no pains or exertions were wanting on their part to influence even the judges in her favour.

The demoiselles Verrières, those Paphian veterans, those Cyprian matrons, had now retired from active service, and merely received visitors at their own house; they had likewise established a theatre there in opposition to Mademoiselle Guimard, who, as may be supposed, owed them no particular love or affection. She related to me a very recent anecdote of the younger Verrière. M. de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, thinking to pass a pleasant hour with that lady, whom he hoped to find alone, was so unfortunate as to surprise her in company with the courier of the Comtesse de Marsan, a tall, good-looking Biscayan. The prelate, like a complete man of the world, evinced no confusion of voice or manner, but coolly addressed himself to the courier. "Friend," he said, "I come to ask a favour of you. I have despatches of the utmost importance to forward to M. de la Vrillière. Carry them for me to Versailles; I will give you two louis to drink my health with." His generosity succeeded, and the courier took up his hat to depart, saying to Mademoiselle Verrière, "Your pardon, mademoiselle, but as I am paid twice as well for going as staying, I trust you

will have the goodness to excuse my wishing you a good day."

After amusing me with a thousand and one similar tales, Mademoiselle Guimard entreated me to grant her a favour which would essentially serve her, that of honouring with my presence one of the performances which took place at her theatre. I promised to do so without reflecting what I was about, and she quitted me, delighted with the success of her visit. In the course of the day I mentioned my engagement with Mademoiselle Guimard to my sister Chon, who loudly protested against it, representing to me how greatly I should forfeit my present share of favour and credit if I were recognised in such disreputable society. I then saw my error, but too late to amend it, and I had to make the best of a bad bargain. It was arranged that I should repair to the house of Mademoiselle Guimard in disguise, and that I should merely witness the representation of the play from a private box, and return home immediately the curtain fell, under pretence of receiving a courier from Versailles who had to carry back letters from me.

All this was done, and well for me it was that I had taken all these precautions; for in the saloon I should have met with the wicked and malicious Comte de Lauraguais, who mistook eccentricity for originality, and set himself down as a *bel esprit* because he was for ever imagining some silly and absurd conceit. He was laughed at for his attempts at wit, and despised for the meanness of his conduct. He had consumed (without deriving any personal advantage) his credit at Court and his fortune in the city. He was everywhere quoted and cited as a model, it is true; but it was a model all were advised to shun, and an example all were resolved not to imitate.

When first I attracted His Majesty's favour, Comte de Lauraguais took upon himself to behave most shamefully towards me; he, who associated daily and hourly with the lowest wretches of the metropolis, dared to call into question the King's taste in bestowing his affections upon me.

He himself was completely wradped up in an extremely

plain and commonplace mistress, sprung from I know not where. All at once he made her quit the name she bore and take that of "Comtesse de Tonneau." This ridiculous allusion to the name of my husband cost M. de Lauraguais dear; for the King, having heard of it, looked upon it as a personal affront, and exiled the unfortunate jester, who was obliged to retire into England, from which he only returned the day of my visiting Mademoiselle Guimard, and had he but discovered me, he would not have lost the opportunity of playing me one of his amiable tricks. Fortunately I escaped his prying eyes; and to none but Mademoiselle Guimard and her particular and intimate friends was the secret of my having been present at the theatre known. You see that I took all possible precautions to preserve my dignity.

CHAPTER XXVI

Quarrel of the Comtesse du Barri with the Duc de Richelieu—Generosity of the King—The relations of the Vicomte du Barri are desirous of seeing him married—The natural daughter of Louis XV.—M. Yon, her guardian—Measures adopted with regard to the Prince de Condé—Certain conditions—Money the grand smoother of all difficulties—A marriage.

Upon my return from Fontainebleau I had a quarrel with the Duc de Richelieu respecting Mademoiselle Guimard, which I must not pass over in silence. The noble Duke, although affecting a great friendship for the Prince de Soubise, could not, in reality, endure him. Ancient military disputes were raked up, and a continual jealousy was kept up by the fear of each proving a dangerous rival near the King. M. de Richelieu, by virtue of his office as first gentleman of the bedchamber, had the entire superintendence of the Comédie Française, whose best performers were accustomed to take a part in the private theatricals conducted by Mademoiselle Guimard. Under pretext of the public good, the wily Marshal prohibited the French comedians from appearing elsewhere than on the boards of their own theatre.

The Prince de Soubise, perceiving the intention of this sudden regard for the interests of Paris, applied to the King to withdraw the offensive injunction. M. de Laborde, who was a great favourite of Louis XV., joined in the request. I came in as a third suppliant in the cause of Mademoiselle Guimard, and victory decided in our favour. The Duke was perfectly furious at his failure. Having accidentally encountered me in the Des Cerfs at Fontainebleau, he spoke to me in a tone and manner which greatly annoyed me; and, becoming very angry, I replied to him in an equally severe strain. Carried away by rage, the Marshal had no longer

any command over himself; and what further he might have said or done I know not, had not the King, fortunately for us both, happened to pass within twenty steps from where we stood. The sight of his Sovereign restored the Duke to the possession of his senses, and, recognising the folly of his conduct, he hastily implored me, in a low voice, to pronounce his pardon. My only answer was to dart on him a look of the most perfect contempt, and to quit him.

Meanwhile I had not forgotten my promise of endeavouring to render Mademoiselle Guimard some essential service in a pecuniary way; nor did I consider myself at all released by the assistance I had lately afforded her in the matter of her theatrical dispute with the Duc de Richelieu. With the hope of attracting the King's attention towards her, I gave a little fête, of which the Duc de Duras undertook the management. It went off delightfully. First, several pieces were played from *Pandora*, an opera, the words of which were written by Voltaire; afterwards, some clever proverbs were acted, and the whole finished by a ballet, in which Mademoiselle Guimard took a part. As I expected, His Majesty was charmed with the exceeding grace and elegance of her dancing, which he extolled in the warmest terms. I took the opportunity, when his enthusiasm was at its height, to insinuate a few regrets that so talented an actress should be so unfortunately crippled in her purse and, consequently, exposed to so many embarrassments.

"Indeed!" said Louis XV., when I had ceased speaking, "and so poor Mademoiselle Guimard is in difficulties! I am very sorry for her. But I dare say neither the Prince de Soubise nor M. de Laborde will suffer her to want for anything."

"Ah! Sire," I rejoined; "they are far from acting liberally towards her. And really she has such a beautiful house, and does the honours of it so elegantly, that she is well deserving the munificence of Your Majesty."

"Well, well," replied the King; "I will think about it."

I lost no time in apprising Mademoiselle Guimard that His Majesty had promised to bear her in mind; upon which

she immediately began to contract fresh debts, trusting, from what I mentioned to her, that her old ones would be all settled by the Royal bounty.

Three or four days after this Louis XV. put into my hand a paper, saying, with a smile, "You see I have not forgotten your *protégée*." It contained a deed of settlement upon Mademoiselle Guimard of an annuity of 1,500 livres! Such generosity perfectly overwhelmed me. The idea of 1,500 livres to a woman who owed nearly a million! I really could not recover myself. Nevertheless I endeavoured to dissimulate my ill-humour and dissatisfaction, for the good King would never have been able to enter into my views and ideas on the subject. For my own part, as I would not offend Mademoiselle Guimard by offering her so paltry a sum, I added to it from myself a pearl necklace worth 10,000 livres, and a similar sum in money. When the whole reached her, and she saw the narrow limits set by Louis XV. to his munificence, she could not conceal her disappointment, and the King's splendid present formed for many days the favourite topic of conversation.

After my reconciliation with Mademoiselle Guimard (for, in fact, I seem determined to confuse periods), that is to say, before the long story I have just been relating, I was concerned in an affair of much greater importance, in which His Majesty displayed a far more princely generosity. I allude to the marriage of my nephew, Vicomte Adolphe du Barri. Comte Jean was very anxious to see this young man eligibly settled, as he had already suffered considerable annoyance and vexation from his rash and thoughtless conduct. My brother-in-law reaped in the extravagant conduct of his son the harvest he had himself sown. The young Viscount possessed many excellent qualities; but, imprudent and dissipated, he had already injured his health and nearly destroyed his reputation likewise. His entire destruction must infallibly ensue if he were not stopped in his wild career. Marriage alone seemed to promise a happy termination to his folly and our inquietude, and we eagerly availed ourselves of the only chance left to us.

Suitable alliances were easily formed; in fact, so many proposals had been made from families of the highest rank and power that our only difficulty seemed likely to be which we would select. In the midst of our deliberations Comte Jean said to me:

"Sister, you will scarcely guess what I am disposed to attempt."

"Some grand project," I answered, laughing.

"You are right," replied Comte Jean; "no less a scheme than to ally Adolphe with the Royal Family."

"Moderate, indeed!" I cried. "And which of the Princesses do you design the honour of demanding in marriage? Will you accept Madame Clotilde, or deign to prefer Madame Elizabeth?"

"Neither the one nor the other, my giddy sister. But do, I pray of you, be serious for one minute, and you shall hear. Old Yon has brought up a daughter of His Majesty called Mademoiselle de Saint-André; she is now at the convent of the Presentation. She would, you must allow, be a very suitable match for my son; so only use your interest with the Royal papa, and the thing is settled."

It appeared to me a much more reasonable thing to demand for my nephew the hand of a spurious branch of Royalty than to aspire to one of the daughters of France, and I lost no time in speaking of it to His Majesty. Louis XV. troubled himself very little with his illegitimate offspring, whom he never saw and rarely enquired after, leaving them to live or die in peace; and I can take upon myself to declare that he never occupied two minutes in his life with any thought or concern for their welfare. These children, whether male or female, had a fixed sum of about 500,000 livres settled on them at their birth, the interest of which was allowed to accumulate until they came of age, by which means the capital was necessarily doubled. Should any of the number happen to die, his or her portion was divided among the survivors, but in very unequal proportions, by far the larger part going to the sons. The daughters nearly

always espoused men of quality, and their mothers were generally married off to bankers, money-brokers, &c.

When first I applied to the King for the hand of Mademoiselle Saint-André, I had to explain to him which of his progeny I alluded to, for as he had no less than eighty of these natural descendants he was apt to confuse himself in the recollection of them. All at once a light broke in upon him, and he comprehended wonderfully well the individual I was desirous of securing for the Vicomte Adolphe, but all my endeavours could not elicit from him a decided answer one way or the other. He took it into his head to affect the anxious parent—a character he would sometimes assume, when the fit was on him. He began to express his doubts of the happiness of his beloved daughter were she married to my nephew; and he very gravely asked me, with the most paternal air, if I believed that the young Vicomte du Barri would make her a kind and tender husband. I promised everything for my nephew, explained to Louis XV. how gratifying the alliance would be to me, and, in a word, after some demurring on his side, obtained his consent. That agreed upon, the King, who was a most orderly man, began to examine his papers. "I see," said he, "that it is a person named Yon who has the guardianship of my daughter. Let him be desired to come to me immediately, that I may have some conversation with him concerning this marriage."

In pursuance of the King's desire, Comte Jean went in search of Yon. M. Yon was a grave, formal and affected personage, who, proud of filling the place of father to a daughter of the King, treated all matters relative to his ward with the most solemn gravity. However, Comte Jean, who never anticipated the possibility of a mischance under any circumstances, and still less in the present, went, with the most perfect assurance of success in his ambitious project, to seek out M. Yon, to whom he communicated his project, pointing out at the same time all the advantages which should accrue to him as the lady's guardian. The crafty old man assured him of his entire devotion to his wishes, and immediately repaired, according to the King's orders, to Versailles.

It fell to the lot of Chamilly, as *prime minister to His Majesty*, to introduce the important Yon to the King, and, by virtue of his office, he also remained in the apartment and became a witness to the conversation which ensued—a conversation which he lost not a moment in carrying to my brother-in-law. It commenced with Louis XV. explaining his intentions respecting his daughter to M. Yon. The latter then replied:

"Sire, it grieves me beyond measure to oppose Your Majesty's wishes, but I am bound to declare that the marriage is impossible."

"And why so, may I ask, my good Yon?" said Louis XV.

"Because one so nearly related to Your Majesty as is my amiable ward should not be exposed to any reverses of fortune. The husband you propose for your daughter holds but a precarious existence at Court, of which he may be deprived at any minute. No, Sire; if you will reflect, you will see the impossibility of the Vicomte du Barri espousing Mademoiselle de Saint-André. You certainly are sole arbiter of your daughter's fate, but I, who have the exceeding honour to be your representative with the young lady, cannot betray her interests so far as to give my countenance and consent to this marriage. Permit me, Sire, to withdraw from the affair altogether, and let not my name appear upon any of the deeds which may be drawn up."

The King was silent, and Yon, encouraged by this tacit approbation of his opinion, continued to keep up a hot fire against our party, and to attack us in every possible way. He next advanced the fact of the Marquis de la Tour du Pin la Choise having applied to him for his interest with Mademoiselle de Saint-André. The King, who, fearing my influence, was anxious to bring the affair to a termination, availed himself of this concluding argument to settle the matter, by saying:

"You are perfectly right. I had quite forgotten M. de la Tour du Pin, to whom I had, in fact, promised the hand of my daughter, and I thank you for recalling him to my

recollection before I had unintentionally broken my faith with him; I therefore hasten to atone for my fault by commissioning you to call on him in my name and acquaint him that I accept him as the husband of the young person in question."

Yon, whose heart was entirely devoted to the Choiseuls, lost no time in executing those measures which must necessarily deprive my nephew of all hope of success. The good creature, Chamilly, who, on the other hand, was in my interests, ran to apprise me of all that had passed, and I confess that it occasioned me great annoyance and dissatisfaction. Again I urged the matter on the King; but, notwithstanding my reiterated importunities, I could not move him from his last determination. He pleaded a prior engagement formed with the Marquis de la Tour du Pin la Choise, which had for a time escaped his recollection, and afterwards excused himself upon the grounds of the very dissipated conduct of my nephew. I was therefore compelled to give up all thoughts of this marriage and look about for some other equally eligible. Meanwhile, the Prince de Soubise, learning the vast pains and trouble I was taking to procure a suitable establishment for my nephew, came to me one morning and proposed to me a relation of his own, Mademoiselle de Tournon. This Mademoiselle de Tournon was at once the most beautiful and nobly-born lady in the kingdom, but at the same time one of the very poorest of our nobility. She was allied to nearly all the Court, and would be of incalculable advantage to her husband as far as introducing him to the first society in the nation went. We were perfectly dazzled with the splendid prospect held out by this match; Comte Jean particularly was charmed with it. The want of fortune we neither of us looked upon as any obstacle; that was a deficiency we knew very well how to get over. The only difficulty which seemed likely to arise was from her relations, some of whom were very illustrious; for instance, the Prince de Condé, son-in-law to the Prince de Soubise, was one.

This Prince had been a great plague to us, and, as you will hereafter find, had cost us no inconsiderable sum to bring back to the Court party. I knew him well enough to be certain that if he agreed to serve us in the matrimonial project we had in view he would expect to be well rewarded for his conduct. I therefore commissioned the Maréchale de Mirepoix to confer with him on the subject at the house of the Princesse de Monaco. M. de Soubise, either through timidity or what he deemed prudent reasons, having declined mentioning the affair to him.

The particulars of this negotiation you will find in the following letter from the Maréchale, which I will transcribe as being best qualified to tell its own tale:

"My dear Countess,—Behold me regularly installed in my room of business, for, like all other literary women, I have one now; and my present intention is to give you a true and faithful account of all my proceedings in a certain affair. By the way, that *affair* of yours I find to be no trifle, and, notwithstanding the good opinion with which a plenipotentiary generally looks upon his mode of arranging things, I am not so very sanguine in my expectations as to know how far you will approve of the part I have played. However, I have done my very best, as you shall see.

"In the first place I sent to request Madame de Monaco to dine with me, just to make up a little friendly trio—herself, His Highness, and your humble servant. I hinted that I had something to say relative to an affair of which the results might be advantageous to herself and the Prince Madame de Monaco, who, as you know, never refuses a gilded bait, was easily caught, and accepted my invitation with eagerness. She entreated me to relate the important information. I could not resist her earnest entreaties, and at length gave her the full particulars; adding only, by way of embellishment to my tale, that there would be a pretty little present of 50,000 livres for herself in case the Prince was brought to acquiesce in the match. I trust I did not exceed my commission in promising so largely.

"The following day was selected for the grand conference. I had requested Madame de Monaco not to give the Prince any intimation of what was progressing, but I easily perceived by his manner that he knew all she could inform him of. He seemed in an extremely bad humour, complained greatly of the indignities he was continually enduring from the public, and ended by protesting that His Majesty owed him some recompense for all he had undergone for his adherence to the Royal party. I seized the opportunity when want of breath compelled him to seek a pause to say:

"'Nothing would be more easy for Your Highness than to obtain the highest proofs of His Majesty's favour. It only requires a little kindness and conciliation on your part towards a family he particularly honours with his regard.'

"'Ah, indeed!' said the Prince, feigning astonishment. 'And who

may that family be, pray? and how am I expected to favour or assist them?'

"'Merely in a very little matter,' I answered. 'Just add your consent to that of your father-in-law to the marriage of Mademoiselle de Tournon with the Vicomte du Barri.'

"Upon the mention of which, the Prince began to throw up his hands and eyes and to talk loudly of the dishonour which would assuredly attach itself to him if he were to consent to such a thing.

"'Mercy upon me! Prince,' I cried; 'you wholly mistake the thing. There is no dishonour in the case at all; there is only profit.'

"'Remember, madam,' he said, 'that my dignity will be compromised. And what shall I receive in return? Possibly some paltry sum. Certainly, if my just claims were acceded to, I might——'

"'Oh, you shall be fully satisfied,' I cried. 'Madame du Barri is the best and most liberal of women; and, if you agree to the union of the young people, you may confidently reckon upon her friendship and gratitude.'

"'Then let her prove it. I have debts which I must immediately liquidate, or, at least, a part of them; 1,500,000 livres will suffice for that purpose. Let the King give them to me. Let him, besides this, purchase my hotel, that I may effectually free myself from my pecuniary difficulties; and, finally, let him procure my admission into the Council with the title of Minister of State.'

"'Can anyone be more reasonable than His Highness?' said the Princesse de Monaco, turning towards me.

"'Certainly not,' I replied.

"You see, my dear Countess, how far I have gone. I trust you will approve of my proceedings. For my own part, I am of opinion that you should ask for the Prince all he desires to obtain. It is not you who will have to furnish the means of satisfying his avarice, so why should you haggle for a few thousands in an affair of so much consequence? Adieu, my lovely friend.

"Ever yours, with sincere attachment."

These demands appeared to me exorbitant and greatly alarmed me; nevertheless, it was necessary for me to speak to the King respecting them. I set about this difficult business with all the tact I could command.

"Sire," I said, "you have refused us the opportunity of forming one good alliance for my nephew, we have now another proposed for him—not equal to the other, certainly, but proceeding from a highly respectable and well-connected family."

"And who is this lady?" enquired Louis XV.

"Mademoiselle de Tournon."

"Indeed!" replied the King, "a most excellent match indeed. And what says the Prince de Condé to this alliance?"

"He says no, just at present," I returned; "but he will change his tone directly he can obtain from Your Majesty certain favours he is desirous of asking from you."

"What are they?" cried Louis XV. "Some folly or other, I make no doubt."

"Rather say extravagances, Sire," I answered. "His demands are as unreasonable as they are boundless: he asks for both heaven and earth."

"Poor Viscount!" ejaculated the King, "he is certainly very unfortunate. But tell me, what is it the Prince does ask?"

"Perfect extravagances I tell you, Sire."

"But of what nature? What is it he requires?"

"In the first place, 1,500,000 livres to silence his most noisy and clamorous creditors; secondly, that you shall purchase his hotel of him; and, thirdly and lastly, that you shall grant him admission to the Council with the title of Minister."

"Bless me!" cried Louis XV., sighing, "how you frighten me. Really these conditions are enormous and unreasonable, but still not so bad as I expected, my dear Countess. You exaggerated the matter prodigiously."

I was delighted with this speech, and, after I had assured the King of the pleasure it gave me to find he was not more displeased and surprised at the excessive price at which the Prince de Condé valued his consent, he added, "I am resolved to please you, and to do all in my power to procure an honourable alliance for your nephew. I therefore grant the sum demanded, and will purchase the Hôtel de Condé to build an additional wing to the Comédie Française. As for the admittance into the Council, it may be a point of some difficulty; but should the Prince not obtain his wish immediately, he may depend upon my promise that he shall sooner or later be gratified in that likewise."

Louis XV. had his own reasons for replying thus to me; for he judged, and with reason, that his ministers would look with mistrust and dislike upon the entry of the Prince de Condé to the Ministry. His spirit of arbitrary domination

was too well known not to be dreaded. The pacific monarch trembled at the bare idea of kindling an intestine war among his ministers, nor could any consideration have prevailed upon him to provoke one.

The good-natured Maréchale de Mirepoix again set to work. She hastened to Madame de Monaco, met there His Most Serene Highness, and related to him what the King had engaged to do. The Prince de Condé raved and fumed, declared that he despised pecuniary advantages, and sought honour—honour alone! In fact, he behaved most amusingly upon the occasion. The Maréchale was not dismayed, and, to serve me, she determined to fight for me by hinting at the possibility of my own downfall. Listen to the following, my friend, and you will own that such scenes can never be acted anywhere but at Court.

"But, indeed, Your Highness seems determined to stand in the way of your own interest," urged the Maréchale. "You have not reflected upon half the advantages which may result to you from this marriage. Mademoiselle de Tournon is seventeen years of age, transcendently beautiful, highly born, well educated, clever, witty and virtuous. She will be admitted into the intimate society of Madame du Barri, where she will have daily opportunities of seeing and being seen by the King. Who knows what may happen? She may please him, and so, in progress of time, eclipse her aunt. Think of all you would gain were she to become the King's mistress! Or suppose things did not proceed so far, the Du Barri family, proud of their relationship to you, will feel it their interest to advance you to the highest pitch of elevation, in order that, in case of any disgrace or misfortune befalling them, they may be enabled to shelter themselves beneath the shadow of your power and greatness. You despise money; everyone knows your general disinterestedness; but then you have debts to pay and creatures to oblige. This family will espouse your cause and assist your finances, and you may command their ability to its utmost."

"Your Highness," Madame de Monaco interrupted, "Madame de Mirepoix speaks like an oracle, and you will

do well to follow her advice. Take what is offered you, and receive the King's assurance that you shall be admitted into the Council: it is an engagement which must ultimately turn to your great advantage."

"Well," exclaimed the Prince, "then I consent to the projected marriage, but on one fresh condition—that 300,000 livres shall be divided between you two ladies."

The Maréchale came to inform me of the termination of this great affair. Her modesty and moderation would not permit her to tell me the last clause in the treaty. The Prince de Condé, however, took care I should not remain ignorant of it, but sent the Prince de Soubise to speak to me of it. I referred him to the Comptroller-General, and everything was settled in the happiest manner possible. His Serene Highness received the 1,500,000 livres and the price of his hotel, and the two ladies shared the 300,000 livres between them. Over and above all this, Madame de Monaco claimed the 50,000 livres which the Maréchale had promised her in my name, and she further received a superb wedding present. I have already told you, my friend, and I cannot too often repeat it to you, that at Court all difficulties are to be got over by the aid of money.

The marriage was celebrated at St. Roch with the utmost splendour and magnificence. The King spared no expense, and caused the nuptial feast to be prepared with a most uncommon disregard of money and a truly princely grandeur. There was a regular succession of fêtes given in honour of this union, and I, in the midst of them all, amused myself with forming a political intrigue, the particulars of which you shall have hereafter. I will not introduce politics upon the heels of a wedding, but reserve it for a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Comtesse de Narbonne—An anonymous letter—Interview with Madame de Narbonne—She gains over the Princesses to receive Madame du Barri—M. Montesquiou and the Comte de Provence—The Comte de Creutz—Conversation with the Duc d'Aiguillon—The Marquis de Caraccioli—The Comte de Fuentes—Lord Stormont—Division of Poland—Letter of Prince Louis de Rohan.

THE Comtesse de Narbonne, maid of honour to the Princesse Adelaide, was a woman of much sense, gifted with that self-denial and devotion to the reigning family that would have rendered her at all times ready to sacrifice her own interests to theirs. Indeed, Madame de Narbonne carried this heroism so far that she was put to bed one fine morning of a little Prince of whom she was not the mother, and this, too, to oblige a great Princess, who, being unmarried, could not conveniently go through the affair herself. This excessive complaisance was censured by many persons; but Madame Adelaide, strict and religious as she professed to be, evinced a greater degree of moderation. She did not even reprove her lady of honour for what had passed. She withdrew from her none of her accustomed marks of favour. On the contrary, for this affair, which drew upon Madame de Narbonne the blame of many, the indulgent Princess appeared anxious to atone by increased confidence and friendship.

In addition to the character I have just described, Madame de Narbonne possessed extreme ambition, and a very superior skill in all Court intrigues. She most ardently desired to play an active part herself. She well knew her perfect capability for so doing, and yet was compelled to look on, a complete nonentity.

The interests of the Comtesse de Narbonne appeared inseparably attached to those of Madame Adelaide. During the species of interregnum which occurred between the demise of Madame de Pompadour and my own appearance at Versailles, the Princesse Adelaide had acquired some influence over the mind of her Royal parent; but when I became the object of the affections of Louis XV., Madame Adelaide thought proper to treat me in a manner which quickly drew upon her the King's displeasure. The afflicted maid of honour retired to share with her mistress the grief and disappointment caused by this failure of credit and power.

Madame de Narbonne, with that tact she so eminently possessed, easily perceived that the only way of winning back any authority, either for her mistress or herself, would be to bring about a reconciliation between this Princess and myself; and she deemed the marriage of my nephew, the young Vicomte du Barri, a favourable opportunity of putting her plans into execution.

About this period I received an anonymous letter, in which the writer requested I would repair secretly to Paris, and that, at a certain day and hour named, a lady, attired after a certain fashion, would present herself at my hotel. I was further entreated to give the necessary orders that my servants might admit this female without delay, as she had many very important matters to discuss with me, which might be attended with the most fortunate consequences to myself.

My first idea upon perusing this letter was that some hoax was intended—an opinion in which my sister-in-law so fully coincided that it was at length decided I should not go to Paris. Still this mysterious assignation puzzled me greatly, and I at length mentioned the affair to the Duc d'Aiguillon, to whom I also showed the anonymous note. He examined it attentively for some minutes, and then exclaimed:

"The writing is evidently disguised, but I think I recognise it as that of Mademoiselle de Narbonne, maid of

honour to the Princesse Adelaide, and, as it evidently implies a desire to conciliate, I advise you not to reject her overtures."

"Supposing it were Madame de Narbonne," I answered, "what good can she do me? You know I have not the honour to number her among my friends."

"Still," the Duke answered, "it is evident she aspires to become such, very possibly because she finds it best calculated to advance her interests. Now, as it may somewhat aid your own plans to be upon good terms with her, and as I know you are the most kindly disposed of all living creatures, I see no reason why you should refuse her offered services; besides, a journey to Paris is no great matter. You may just as well hear what she has to say. You can afterwards decide much better what you will do."

Accordingly I went to Paris, and at the appointed hour a female was ushered into my apartment enveloped in a strange-looking cloak, and her head covered with a thick black veil, which she had no sooner removed than I discovered M. d'Aiguillon had rightly conjectured—my anonymous correspondent was no other than Madame de Narbonne. Despite the habitual tact and self-possession of this lady, she evidently laboured under no trifling agitation at thus meeting me. I could not find in my heart to prolong her embarrassment, but hastened to enquire what had procured me the honour of this visit.

"Ah! madam," she replied, "I have deep cause for being angry with those who are inimically disposed towards you, for they have led me into an error I shall never be able to forgive myself for; and when you first appeared at Versailles they surrounded you with a cloud of calumnies through which it was impossible to form a fitting estimation of your worth. Happily the veil of prejudice is now withdrawn, and my earnest wish is to atone for my unintentional error by proffering the sincerest friendship; and did you but know how ardently I aspire to the title of your friend, you would pardon me the different sentiments I before entertained, believing I acted solely through the misrepresentations of your enemies."

So humble a repentance touched my heart. I replied in terms equally conciliatory, and before we had been a quarter of an hour in each other's company, Madame de Narbonne and myself were established upon the most intimate footing. She said to me:

"My dear Countess, I would fain offer you more solid proofs of my regard than empty words, but, alas! my power can avail you nothing; that of my Royal mistress might indeed be advantageous, and I will use my best exertions to procure it for you."

"Nothing in the world could be more agreeable to me," I answered. "I have always been most anxious to obtain the favour of Madame Adelaide, but all my efforts to attract the notice of that Princess have unfortunately been fruitless."

"I will hope that this time you will be more successful. But the friendship of Madame Adelaide will not suffice; we must endeavour to gain for you that of her Royal sisters, particularly the Dauphiness."

"Ah!" I cried, "I fear the favour of the latter lady I must never hope to attain; a reconciliation between us is but too impossible."

"Nay, nay," returned Madame de Narbonne; "with zeal and perseverance all things are possible; and you shall see, my dear Countess, that no obstacles are permitted to interfere with the wishes of those who are desirous of serving you."

We then talked over several measures very important to the success of our enterprise. It was agreed that, for the present, our meeting should be concealed, and that we should abstain from visiting; even our correspondence was to be conducted through an indirect channel. Madame de Narbonne begged I would permit her to talk scandal of me occasionally, in order to conceal our good understanding the better, and to prevent the chance of any suspicion; by which I comprehended that my new friend had not been in the habit of sparing me in her conversation.

Madame de Narbonne set to work without delay. She first attacked Madame Adelaide in my favour, pointing out to this Princess the misery of being at Court without either

credit or influence, asking at the same time why, after Her Highness had been upon such excellent terms with the Marquise de Pompadour, she should keep up so different a line of conduct towards me? I was a hundred times preferable to Madame de Pompadour; and then His Majesty's attachment appeared to gain such ground, my power was so immense, and I exhibited so strong an inclination to oblige Madame Adelaide, that really it was a pity to refuse my offered friendship.

These arguments, particularly the latter, went far to prove with the Princess that I was not the hateful creature she had at first imagined me, and, once convinced of her error, this good-natured Princess seconded me even beyond my expectations by urging her sisters to follow her example. She declared to Madame de Narbonne that she could not separate herself from the other Princesses, who had so fully shared in her hostility against me; that it was requisite they should be included in the treaty of peace, and that if any reconciliation took place it must be a general one. To bring this about Madame Adelaide herself undertook the task of bringing her sisters round to her opinion.

These latter were not a little surprised at the sudden change in the tone of Madame Adelaide; but, as she was the eldest, accustomed to command, and they equally habituated to obedience, they promised to act as she dictated.

Louis XV. had been apprised by me of the particulars of this grand female diplomacy, the success of which he wished to expedite by every means in his power. M. de Montesquiou-Fezensac was known to possess great ascendency over the mind of the Comte de Provence. The King sent for him, and in a private interview expressed the pleasure he should experience could he but see the Comte and Comtesse de Provence evince a more friendly disposition towards me; adding that anyone who exerted his influence successfully in the cause should ere long receive striking proofs of the Royal satisfaction. M. de Montesquiou-Fezensac concealed beneath the appearance of frivolity an extreme ambition, consequently the hint was not thrown away upon him;

and to gratify his Sovereign and receive the promised marks of favour became with him a cherished purpose. To accomplish his design he employed himself in my cause with a zeal which well deserved success; and when the Princesses hinted to their nephew their project of an approaching reconciliation, they were agreebly surprised to find the Prince and his spouse animated with sentiments equally benevolent.

It now only remained to gain over the Dauphiness, and this was no easy task. My friends chose for a mediator a lady named Madame de Cossé-Brissac. This choice was much censured, for there were several reports in circulation at Versailles which tended to imply that the wife of M. de Cossé-Brissac must, of all persons, be the least inclined to render me a service. In spite of these rumours, however, Madame de Cossé-Brissac conducted herself towards me with admirable greatness of soul. She spoke in my favour, and that so gently yet persuasively, so unassumingly and yet so much to the purpose, that by degrees the wrath of the Dauphiness melted away. In a word, the affair was prospering as well as my most sanguine wishes could have expected. Already a grand fête was talked of, at which I was to be present, in company with all the children and grandchildren of Louis XV., when an unexpected event put an end to the project and effectually destroyed all my hopes of a reconciliation. In the libels published against me (after the death of Louis XV.), which were indeed but a tissue of falsehoods, it has been asserted that the Dauphin's interference alone prevented the expected reconciliation between the Princesses and myself. This is an utter falsehood. The Dauphin took no part in the affair; and its failure (as I have just said) was attributable solely to an event, as unexpected as important, and which, for this reason, I must state as clearly as possible.

The Comte de Creutz, ambassador from Sweden, whom I frequently saw, and always with increased pleasure, begged of me one day to grant him a private interview. I consented, imagining that he merely wished to announce to me the approaching fulfilment of the intention the King of Sweden

had, during his stay in Paris, spoken of as occupying a large share of his ideas. My supposition, however, was erroneous.

Comte de Creutz, from the particulars which had been forwarded to him by the Swedish minister at the Court of St. Petersburg, had penetrated into the designs of Russia, Prussia and Austria relative to the division of Poland. This division was contrary to the interests of Sweden, and still more unfavourable to France, which alone possessed sufficient power to prevent so arbitrary and destructive a measure. The Count had lost no time in communicating his discovery to the Duc d'Aiguillon, who would scarcely listen to him or believe so improbable a tale. The Count renewed his attack, but could not prevail on M. d'Aiguillon to be more attentive or more credulous. Nevertheless, each courier that arrived from St. Petersburg brought more exact information and the most convincing facts. The ambassador, finding all other chance hopeless, determined, by my assistance, to obtain direct access to His Majesty, that he might warn him of the frightful disaster with which Poland was threatened.

I listened attentively while the Comte de Creutz proceeded to lay before me the consequences which, in his opinion, would follow the dismemberment of Poland. I cannot say I understood much of the dangers he dwelt so forcibly upon. However, I promised to mention the affair to His Majesty after I had first spoken to the Duc d'Aiguillon. The Duke was my friend, and I would have suffered all the Polands in the world to have been divided and subdivided before I would have offended him.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the Swede. "Madam, this is precisely what I dreaded. It is necessary to speak with His Majesty himself on the subject; he alone can save Europe from the misfortune which it——"

"So much the worse for Europe," I replied. "I would willingly save it, were not its interests opposed to those of my friends."

The next time I saw M. d'Aiguillon I took him apart and related all that had passed between the Swedish

ambassador and myself. He heard me with evident ill-humour, and when I had finished, he said:

"My sweet friend, I am most awkwardly situated. Abroad the ambassadors do not use me well. M. Durand, who is at St. Petersburg, is said to possess great diplomatic talents, but he certainly does not exercise them just now to His Majesty's advantage; M. de Pons, at Berlin, is a simpleton, who flatters himself with being a prodigious genius, and mistakes the mockery and derision he excites for approbation; M. de Rohan is ruining himself at Vienna as fast as he can, and is even injuring his own affairs more seriously than the King's. At home things are still worse; not a sou in the exchequer, not one perfect regiment nor a general fit to take the command of one. How, with all these disadvantages, would it be possible for me to recommend a war?"

"Will you, then, remain tranquil?"

"Certainly," replied the Duke, "as long as I can."

"But will not the King be displeased with you for not having warned him of the state of things?"

"The King," answered the Duke, "knows more of the affair than I do, and only feigns ignorance that he may have the opportunity of turning the blame over to me."

"Then you will suffer these ambitious Powers—Russia, Prussia and Austria—to divide Poland between them?"

"Certainly," he said, "and to take Turkey into the bargain, if they please."

"But," I cried, "will not this be disgraceful to France?"

"We must put up with the disgrace," replied the Duke; "our poverty obliges us."

"What has become of all the revenues of the kingdom?" I enquired.

"Can you, madam, ask that?" said the Duke, half reproachfully. "Tell them to bring you the accounts of the sums paid to your order, and that of His Majesty on your account, and you will see to what they amount."

"Alas!" I cried, "I should break my heart if I thought I had contributed to the ruin of France."

"No, no!" answered the Duke, "do not distress yourself; that will not re-establish the exhausted finances of the kingdom any more than your economy could replenish our empty treasury. So cheer up, my lovely Countess, I entreat of you. Give yourself no concern for what is going on, but live happily and enjoy yourself as you have hitherto done."

I easily gathered from the discourse of M. d'Aiguillon that Louis XV. had made up his mind not to suffer any person to speak to him respecting the state of Poland. I hinted this melancholy truth to the Comte de Creutz, hoping that he would leave off importuning the Duc d'Aiguillon. But my poor friend was attacked by a fresh host of tormentors in the persons of the ministers of Naples, Spain, England and Denmark, who had all learned in their turn what M. de Creutz had guessed long before them.

I must say a few words respecting these diplomatists. The Neapolitan minister was the Marquis de Caraccioli, a man distinguished for his wit, cunning and the reputation of being the most habitual liar ever known. If you enquired after his health, his morning walk, or an entertainment given by him the preceding day, you might be assured he would answer you with a falsehood. No time or place was ever too sacred for the exhibition of this vice.

Next in order was the Marquis de Fuentes, the Spanish ambassador. Crafty as an Italian, graceful as a Frenchman, and haughty as a Castilian, he possessed the character of a highly talented man, and he well deserved it. For my own part, I detested him. He was a perfect Choiseul in his heart, and for a long time refused to visit me; nor would he do so till Louis XV. caused the King his master to lay his commands upon him to pay his respects to me forthwith. The haughty Castilian, thus compelled to obey, did so with a very ill grace. He presented himself before me, but with so stiff, constrained and ceremonious an air that the very sight of him wearied me; and yet how much trouble had I not taken to procure those visits I would now so gladly have dispensed with. As for the English

ambassador, Lord Stormont, who resembled the general specimen of English nobility, all I can say is that he was very rich and very stupid. The good lord was not wholly without capacity, but, unfortunately, he mistook the extent of it, and would fain persuade others to give him credit for the vast talent he conceived himself possessed of.

The three ambassadors of whom I have just spoken, and the Baron de Blome, *chargé d'affaires* from Denmark, who is not worthy the trouble of a description, pleaded the cause of Poland with the Duc d'Aiguillon. France, in their opinion, had but to exhibit a show of opposition to save that devoted country. But France refused to interfere, and the partition of Poland took place.

Then arose against us clamours and outcries innumerable. Our allies exclaimed at our conduct, all France censured us, and the newspapers and periodical writers treated us still more severely. The philosophers were silent, because they were the friends of the King of Prussia and the Empress of Russia. We were at length compelled to stop our ears that we might not hear the continual murmurs that arose. We passed the summer very gaily, staying occasionally at Compiègne, Choisy and Fontainebleau. An illegitimate son of the Duc de Condé was married with great pomp; he received a princely dowry, and the most magnificent fêtes were given upon the occasion. About the same time the nuptials of my nephew, Vicomte Adolphe, were celebrated with equal splendour; he was presented with a noble marriage portion, and the whole Court shared in the rejoicings which followed, whilst all agreed that the entertainments provided for the occasion had never been surpassed for elegance and grandeur. In the midst of all these pleasures I received from the Prince de Rohan, our ambassador in Austria, the following letter:

"MADAM,—The tragedy which has just been acted in the North draws towards its conclusion, and the three allies appear conscious that, for the present, they must rest satisfied with the spoils of Poland. The prudent measures adopted by France in this affair are greatly admired in this part of the world. I cannot say much for the gaiety of Vienna. The inhabitants are great religionists, and great dinners are all the mode. Only

imagine, these people have taken upon themselves to complain that the elegant suppers of the French Embassy have diminished the splendour of their elaborate dinners; whereupon the Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote me a very warm remonstrance, desiring me, in the name of Her Imperial Majesty, to refrain from suppers. I replied by a note couched in pretty strong terms; and *petits soupers à l'ambassade de France* still continue as celebrated as ever.

"I rarely see the Empress, who is not too favourably disposed towards me. The fact is, my candour displeases her. I am sorry for it, but a prince of the House of Rohan constrains himself for no one.

"Her Majesty is greatly concerned for the unfortunate Poles, of whom she speaks with great affection. Her regard appears to have extended itself to their country also, if we may judge by the comfortable portion of it she has taken under her own care and keeping.

"The ladies in Austria are pretty. They have some who are esteemed beauties, but I have seen none at all comparable to yourself. Upon my first arrival here I was beset with innumerable questions respecting your matchless charms, the fame of which had preceded me; and so well was the portrait engraved in my memory that I was fully adequate to describing you faithfully. What I have said of you has increased the general feeling of admiration, a matter which has displeased but one person—but that happens to be the first personage in the kingdom. This illustrious individual complains bitterly that at Versailles all attention is bestowed on you to the great disparagement of her daughter.

"The description of the delicious fêtes you are giving increases the tediousness of my exile. Gresset spoke truly when he observed—

'On ne vit qu'à Paris, et l'on végète ailleurs.'[1]

My only consolation is in the hope that I am serving my King, and that you may occasionally condescend to remind my Royal master of the zeal I display in his service.

"Recommend me, I pray you, to the remembrance of the Maréchale de Mirepoix, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and the witty Comtesse de Valentinois. It would be cruel indeed of these ladies to forget one who always bears them in mind. As for you, madam, who occupy so constantly the most prominent place in my esteem and memory, I must call upon you to discharge the debt by allowing that I have some little claim for a small portion of your kind recollection.

"Permit me to remain, ever yours," &c.[2]

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1 It is only at Paris that one lives; elsewhere one vegetates.

2 The Abbé Georgel, in his Memoirs, denies the existence of this letter. Its present publication proves how little his Memoirs are deserving of credit. It is well known that this faithful secretary of M. de Rohan merely wrote his Jesuitical work to exalt his patron and depreciate the Queen.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER XXVIII

M. de Rohan's letter is read at the King's supper-table—Displeasure of the Dauphiness—Madame de Campan—Threats of the Dauphin—The King's note—Scene between the King, the Dauphin and Dauphiness—The young Duc de la Vauguyon—Letter to the Dauphiness—The golden toilette service—The leg of mutton.

THIS letter, my friend—this fatal letter—once again involved me in fresh animosity with the Royal Family, and rendered all chance of a reconciliation wholly impossible.

Prince Louis was in the habit of writing to me from time to time, and, as his letters seldom contained any political information, but were usually filled with the relation of all the scandal of the Court of Vienna, I frequently employed them as a means of diverting the King from the frequent fits of gloomy abstraction to which he had of late been subject.

About the time when the negotiation between the Princesses and myself promised a speedy and favourable termination, His Majesty happened to be at supper with me. The conversation turned on Vienna.

"Have you heard from our ambassador lately?" Louis XV. enquired.

"I have," I answered; "and Prince Louis' letter contains an observation upon the Empress, which has amused me greatly."

"You must read this letter aloud," the King cried; "there are none here but friends and men of honour, so your secret will be quite safe."

I accordingly produced and read the letter. My audience consisted of the Prince de Soubise, the Ducs de la Vrillière,

d'Aiguillon, de Duras, de Richelieu and d'Ayen, with the Marquis de Flammarens and the Marquis de Chauvelin.

Which of these gentlemen betrayed me I know not to this hour, but early next morning the Dauphiness was in possession of all the offensive passages in the letter. Nothing could equal her indignation; she vowed eternal hatred to Prince Louis de Rohan, and you know how well she kept her word. With regard to my share in the business, she flew to the Dauphin, and implored him to take signal vengeance for the insult I had offered her.

The Dauphin fully participated in the wrath of his august spouse, declaring that he would never exchange a word with any member of his family who should advocate my cause, adding that, for his own part, he should insult me wherever he met me as a base and contemptible creature. The first I heard of this explosion was from Madame de Campan,[1] one of the maids of honour to the Dauphiness. I confess I trembled at receiving her note, and lost no time in forwarding it to the King. He replied in the following terms:

"Tranquillise yourself, my dear Countess, tranquillise yourself. Remember, I am your protector and defender, and may surely hope I possess the power, as largely as I have the will, to act in that capacity. I have just sent to desire the attendance of those persons who are so greatly incensed against you. I will myself bring you the particulars of our interview. Meanwhile I beseech you to make yourself perfectly easy and to accept the assurance of my faithful affection."

The King himself arrived about an hour after his letter. He related to me that he had sent for the Dauphin and Dauphiness, as though for the purpose of showing them some curious specimens of antique china, and after a while led them both into a private cabinet in his own apartments. The Dauphiness immediately guessed the King's intention, and throwing herself at his feet, implored him to punish the affront offered to the Empress her mother. Louis XV. raised her from the ground, and said:

"My child, the letter which has so deeply offended you was read aloud by my order, consequently I am the only

1 For her memoirs of the then Dauphiness, see "Memoirs of Marie Antoinette," 2 vols., Court Memoir Series. Nichols & Co., 1895.

guilty person, and I request you to extend to my accomplices that pardon which I cannot believe you will refuse to me."

The Dauphin then interfered, and broke out into the most bitter complaints against me. But the King interrupted him, saying:

"You should speak more temperately, my son, of a lady whom I honour with my protection; you would do well likewise not to bestow such implicit belief on all the calumnies which are related to you respecting her. I can pledge my own word that Madame du Barri entertains the deepest respect for the Dauphiness, and never speaks of either of you but in fitting terms. With regard to yesterday's offence, there are but two really guilty persons—he who wrote the letter, and I who caused it to be read. The Countess is in no degree blamable. I trust, therefore, that you will evince your regard for me by moderating your resentment against her, remembering well that I shall hold any insult offered to that lady as a direct attack upon myself.

The Dauphiness promised obedience to the desires of her grandfather, but the Dauphin preserved a gloomy silence, and retired without making any reply.

This unexpected blow quite overcame me. A thousand times I reproached myself with my thoughtlessness and indiscretion in allowing myself to be persuaded to read the unfortunate letter. To think I had thus unintentionally irritated all the Royal Family against me—at a time, too, when I was anticipating the full enjoyment of their friendship—almost distracted me. My ever-ready friend and excellent adviser, the Maréchale de Mirepoix, recommended my offering an apology to the Dauphin, and addressing a letter to the Dauphiness. The former commission I entrusted to the care of the Duc de la Vauguyon, the son of my old friend of that name. Scarcely, however, had the Duke mentioned his errand, than the Dauphin interrupted him, exclaiming, "Do not speak to me of that woman; she is a ———." But indeed, my friend, you must excuse my repeating what the young Prince did say. Had the words

escaped any other lips I should have been tempted to smile at its violence.

I will transcribe the letter I despatched to the Dauphiness, as I have hitherto done with all those of which I happen to have preserved copies. It may serve to convince you that I was not the writer of the correspondence which daring impostors presumed to publish in my name in 1779.

"MADAM,—I hear that I have had the misfortune to offend you; and, involuntary as has been my offence, I most heartily entreat your pardon for it. The knowledge of having incurred the displeasure of your Royal Highness is a sufficient punishment; and I venture to hope that, after my candid confession and sincere repentance, you will deign to bestow your pardon upon me.

"I confess having (by His Majesty's command) read aloud a letter, which should have been held sacred, before persons who were unfavourably disposed towards me. Still I protest, and I beseech you, madam, to credit my assertion, that in reading the fatal epistle the idea of offending the august Maria Theresa never once crossed my thoughts. None can respect that great Princess more highly than myself for her talents, virtues and extensive genius, and still more as your parent.

"Deign to believe, madam, I beseech you, that I have been more unfortunate than culpable in this affair, and the bare idea of having displeased you is a sufficiently heavy penance for the weightiest crime. I trust you have not for ever withdrawn your Royal favour from me; if so, I shall be compelled to say, notwithstanding the high estimation in which I hold you, that there is no proportion between my offence and your punishment.

"Permit me to remain," &c.

I wrote this letter in the presence of the Maréchale, who fully approved of it, and prophesied a fortunate result. I learned afterwards, through Madame de Campan, that my apology had been graciously received by the Dauphiness, who wished to write to me, but Madame de Noailles dissuaded her from it. The Comte de Saulx Tavannes, first gentleman in waiting to the Dauphiness, came from Her Royal Highness to acknowledge the receipt of my letter, without any further allusion to it. I informed the King of all that had passed. He replied: "You deserve better treatment. Your letter would have melted the anger of a fiend. The Comtesse de Noailles seems to possess the very spirit of malice."

The Princesses espoused the part of the Dauphiness and declared against me, an example which was speedily followed by the Comtesse de Narbonne. This was a lady

who did not pride herself upon a ridiculous fidelity in her friendships. The chances were now against me; she saw little prospect of deriving any advantage from me, and accordingly relapsed into her old habits of enmity towards me.

All these vexations rendered me very sad and dejected. Louis XV., with the hope of consoling me, redoubled his cares and attentions towards me. He gave orders that a magnificent dressing-service of gold, which he had bespoken for me some time previously, should be completed; and one morning, upon entering my boudoir, I found the splendid gift set out for my use. The first view of it completely dazzled me, and, as the first burst of astonishment subsided, I proceeded to examine it more minutely. Never in my life had I seen anything so elegant or so rich. I admired the enamelled ewer, the bottles of most exquisitely-cut crystal, and the vases of the finest Sèvres china. Afterwards I placed myself before the glass, and my whole person appeared reflected in it with tenfold charms. Whilst looking at this noble mirror, a gift from Louis XV., King of France, I recollected the little glass before which I used to arrange my simple toilette when preparing to meet Nicolas Mathon.

To induce you, my friend, to pardon me this little piece of sentiment, I will immediately change the subject by relating an anecdote of a lady who, like myself, was a prey to many regrets, as well as tender reminiscences, and no less ridiculous in some of her fancies than I was. The Comtesse de Mauléau passed the whole of her days in deploring the evils to which a too susceptible heart had reduced her. When she was at table with her husband she never ate, and I really believe that she must have introduced the silly custom, so much in vogue, of sitting like statues round a table covered with food without partaking of scarcely any.

She was one day seated opposite her husband, in a more than ordinary fit of sentimentality, her beautiful cheek supported by her fair round arm, her eye watching the quiet, unromantic manner in which her spouse was busily employed emptying his plate, while she, with a whole soul full of delicate woes, could not swallow a morsel.

"Come, madam," cried M. de Mauléau, at length, "lay aside your troubles, and eat your dinner, I pray of you."

"Alas! I have no appetite," replied the sensitive dame.

"But just try," replied her matter-of-fact husband. "See! this is a capital leg of mutton."

"Ah me!" rejoined the lady, sighing.

"Do not set yourself against it, my dear," cried the husband; "it really eats very tender."

And Madame de Mauléau raised her fine eyes to heaven, and responded, "Surely there never was a more miserable creature!"

You must confess, my friend, that the delicate distress of this lady even exceeds that of the so celebrated mistress of the ill-fated Werter.

CHAPTER XXIX

Fresh intrigues — The exiled Princes — Money the soul of war — The Prince de Condé—Epigrams—The Prince de Condé visits Madame du Barri — Madame de Montesson — The rendezvous — The Princesse de Beauvau — Letter of Madame de Montesson — The King and Madame du Barri — Madame du Barri and the Comtesse de Montesson.

ONE circumstance greatly displeased the King—that was the absence of the Princes d'Orleans, de Condé and de Conti, who had been banished from Versailles ever since their protest against the creation of the Maupeou Parliament. Louis XV. was anxious to see the termination of this persevering opposition from the members of his own family, rightly judging that it would serve to encourage the discontented, and in the end compromise his authority. He said to me one day:

"I am thinking, as you are the only idle person in the Château—that is, the only person who is not occupied with her own plots and intrigues—of employing you in a very delicate embassy."

"Me, Sire!" I exclaimed; "indeed, you had better not, for I am remarkably stupid in all diplomatic affairs. You would probably be more successful if you would bestow this delicate mission upon that Comte de Broglie of whom you are so fond, although, for my own part, I cannot endure him."

"There! there!" Louis XV. cried, "you suffer your friends to fill your head with their prejudices and take a dislike to a man who is not only useful but indispensable to me."

"No, indeed, Sire," I replied; "the hatred I bear the man proceeds solely and entirely from the dictates of my own mind, uninfluenced by the counsels of any other person.

But never mind all that, tell me how I can be serviceable to you."

"I am desirous," the King answered, "of putting an end to the disobedience which excludes the Princes from my presence. Now, suppose you consult with Madame de Valentinois and our good Maréchale and see what plan you can devise to accommodate things to my satisfaction."

I promised the King that I would spare no pains or trouble to prove my zeal. He resumed:

"I do not expect that attachment for me will induce my relatives to desire a termination of their banishment. Endeavour to discover which way their inclinations point; but should money be necessary to effect a reconciliation, distribute it as sparingly as possible. It is becoming lamentably scarce in France, and the want of it alone compelled me to leave the dignity of my crown unasserted in this late affair with Poland."

"How, Sire!" I said. "Do you still bestow a thought upon the roguery of the three allied Powers."

"Ah!" exclaimed Louis XV., sighing deeply, "had De Choiseul but remained near me it would never have happened."

The regret so openly expressed by the King made me tremble, and I hastened to prevent his thoughts from resting too long on his deposed minister by turning the conversation upon the King of Sweden, his ally, who, by the secret aid of France, had succeeded in overthrowing the aristocratic constitution imposed by the nobles on his predecessors. My words had the desired effect, and I saw the eye of Louis XV. kindle with animation, and a noble pride spread itself over his fine features.

Louis XV. possessed the very soul of Royalty, and entered with all his heart and mind into the triumph of a King who either recovered a portion of that authority which had been forcibly taken from him or succeeded in any scheme for the extension of his power. The very mention of a revolt was hateful to his ear. Never, whatever advantage might have accrued to France by humbling

the power of England, would he have consented to acknowledge the independence of America; nor could any inducement have prevailed upon him, as reigning monarch, to surrender to the States-General the slightest portion of his authority. He would have a King be absolute master of all matters placed under his charge, and I agree with him in opinion; nor can I see what good could possibly arise by suffering the people to limit and circumscribe the authority of their King until he became merely a Royal automaton, a sort of State puppet. But, bless me! where am I wandering? I am getting as deeply into politics as most of the females of the day. It may be very well suited for the talent of Madame Necker, but for myself I think I should be better employed following up the thread of my narrative. To proceed then. The King gave me *carte blanche* in the affair. I lost no time in summoning the Maréchale, to whom I explained the desires of His Majesty. When I had finished she said:

"This is not one of the easiest enterprises in the world, although it holds out certain chances of success. The Prince de Conti I look upon as unconquerable; the moment he hears a word of settling differences by a reconciliation he will fume and fret, and talk of all the fine heroes whose names he happens just then to recollect. As for the Prince de Condé, he is assailable through Madame de Monaco; it is against her, therefore, we must direct our batteries. The Duc d'Orleans we must attack through the medium of Madame de Montesson; and then, by a few well-scattered sums of money——"

"What!" I cried, laughingly, "money, my dear Maréchale! Can nothing in this world be achieved without calling in the assistance of that metal?"

"Assuredly not," answered the Maréchale, coolly; "it is the very soul of war, and its wonderful effects are not less known in camps than at Court. Would you support a tottering fidelity, carry off a mistress, surprise a minister, or bribe an ambassador, gold will do it—gold, all-powerful, mighty gold."

No person could more feelingly attest the truths she uttered than Madame de Mirepoix, she who had extracted such amazing sums from the coffers of Louis XV. and his mistresses. Had she but preserved the riches she so plentifully obtained, her fortune must have been immense; but she was a great gambler, and played for exceedingly high stakes. Gambling was a passion I never had the least taste for; neither was it a favourite amusement with Louis XV.; he played, certainly, now and then, but it was merely to kill time, and without either inclination or pleasure inducing him to do so.

I next discussed the embassy with which I was charged with the Comtesse de Valentinois, who immediately undertook to open the affair to the Princesse de Monaco, and she happening to find this latter lady in a particularly communicative frame of mind, drew from her a confession of the embarrassments of her illustrious lover, who, according to custom, was overwhelmed with debts which he had no means or present prospect of paying. "I have no doubt," added Madame de Monaco, "that if His Majesty would deign to assist him in his difficulties, gratitude would decide His Royal Highness to return to Versailles; for, to tell you the truth, he is tired of keeping up the present dissensions, and I am equally weary of living in the solitude to which the obstinacy of the Prince has reduced me."

This speech was quickly repeated to me by Madame de Valentinois, whom I desired to say, when next she spoke with Madame de Monaco, that the King was a kind relative, ready to oblige all those members of his family who submitted to his authority.

The Prince de Condé now found himself in a somewhat difficult situation. On the one hand, the Choiseul party loaded him with flattery to induce him to remain firm in his protestation; they pointed out to him how soon the universal approbation which his firm and noble conduct had obtained would be changed into murmurs and maledictions were he, for interested motives, to abandon a course considered by all patriotic men as the best. The Prince de Condé was brave,

and even loyal, but without any strength or decision of character. You see him still balancing between the party of the King and that of the nation. I can only unite my prayers and best wishes to those who wish him well, as I do, that he will finally range himself by the side of Louis XVI., whose interests are inseparably connected with his own.

On the other hand, he was deeply in debt; neither his pension nor private allowance was now paid to him, and his creditors tormented him without cessation. Madame de Monaco, who liked retirement as little as she relished an empty purse and a continual crowd of creditors, strongly advised his making the necessary submission to the King. She managed to blind him for a time to the consequences of the act he was about to commit, and, leading him by gentle force towards a carriage, she brought him half repentant to Versailles. This submission, or, as some styled it, this treason, did an infinity of mischief to the Prince de Condé. It is true that this measure produced him enormous sums, which were speedily consumed by himself and his dependents; but what he dreaded happened. He was overwhelmed with epigrams, satires, and severe pamphlets, which rained upon him as thickly as hail. The most infamous verses upon him were circulated, some of them being too horrid for repetition. I have found some (spiteful enough, certainly) that I chanced to copy into my tablets. I will transcribe them for your amusement; and they may serve to show you, my friend, that others beside myself came in for a share of the lampooning and satirising so freely exercised in Paris. The first epigram was as follows:

"Quand le prince est à vos genoux,
Vous sentez que le prince est roux;
Et quand son Altesse vous lorgne,
Je vois que Monseigneur est borgne."

And, since I am copying, I will give you another:

"Pour faire une fausse démarche,
Condé se montre le premier;
Crainte que son cousin la Marche,
Des hommes ne soit le dernier."

You will exclaim at the badness of these epigrams. They are not good, I admit; but my principal reason for sending them to you is to prove that the Princes of the Royal Family were as much under the lash of the criticising spirit of the times as the mistress of the King. But to proceed with my narration.

After His Serene Highness had presented his homage to the King he was conducted by his cousin to my house, for it was agreed that the reconciliation should be complete. The Prince acquitted himself with much grace and tolerable composure, spoke of the length of time which had elapsed since he had had the happiness of seeing me, and deplored the loss he had sustained in my society, with a long succession of regrets, returned on my side with the same sincerity with which they were offered. The first visit was one of mutual condolences, but at the second we had a mutual explanation. His Royal Highness informed me that I had been shamefully traduced to him by persons who asserted that I had used all my influence to irritate the King's mind and to widen the breach between them.

"I wish, my lord," I replied, "that I had not also great cause of complaint against you; but as it is so, I cannot be silent. I have heard, from unquestionable authority, that from your palace have issued those infamous libels which served the vile wretch Morand as a sort of model by which to fashion his own black calumnies. Of this I have irrefragable proof; and yet, far from complaining to the King and demanding vengeance at his hands, I have employed my best influence in bringing about a reconciliation with you."

This reply, which it was wholly out of the Prince's power to deny, because he could not avoid acknowledging the truth of what I asserted, completely disconcerted him.

There now remained the Duc d'Orleans to gain over; and ere this was accomplished many were the comings and goings, the endless negotiations and consultations; nor do I believe it ever would have been achieved but for the aid of Madame de Montesson. The Duc d'Orleans, without possessing a superior genius, was endowed with many admirable qualities.

He was prudent, affable, kind, and generous to all around him; the affectionate warmth of his own heart had, despite his exalted rank, procured him many sincerely attached and faithful friends. His many virtues had no fit occasion afforded them of shining out in their fullest splendour, but by those who were admitted to his intimate acquaintance he was equally loved and admired. He was extremely corpulent, but his countenance was strikingly handsome, and his manners noble and engaging. He had always been an ardent admirer of the fair sex, and the present object of his vows was Madame de Montesson, who, by dint of patience and skilful management, succeeded in inducing him to marry her.

At the period I am now speaking of this marriage was much talked of. Madame de Montesson well knew that it was in my power to prevail on His Majesty to approve or condemn it as I thought proper. She therefore observed so guarded a line of conduct wherever I was concerned that it was impossible to entertain the slightest offence against her; indeed, far from speaking ill of me, she never suffered me to be attacked in her presence without instantly taking my part.

Madame de Montesson was presented about the close of 1770. After her marriage she did not again appear at Court; being compelled to live *incognito*, she could not have received at Versailles those honours attached to the rank of first Princess of the Blood Royal. She continued at all times to conduct herself with the most admirable propriety; in fact, she was as much respected as her niece, the Comtesse de Genlis, was disliked. This last-named lady, who at the present time enjoys a degree of credit and influence in the Orleans family—obtained nobody knows how—was by no means deficient in talent; perhaps, indeed, she possessed a more than common share, but still she was so satirical and ill-natured that, in spite of her pretty little person and her harp—on which, by the way, she was a first-rate performer—neither men nor women could endure her for an hour.

My privy councillor, the good Maréchale de Mirepoix,

went to call on Madame de Montesson, who was very anxious to see me, but wished it to be in private, to prevent any chance of our negotiation transpiring. Accordingly a furnished apartment was engaged in the Rue des Vieux Augustins, and a day fixed for the meeting, which was punctually attended by both of us. Madame de Montesson was attended by a faithful attendant who possessed her entire confidence, and I was accompanied by my excellent friend the Maréchale, who amused herself the whole way with laughing at the mystery we were making over so innocent a meeting. I did not in this interview belie the reputation I had acquired for candour and frankness. After the first compliments, I addressed Madame de Montesson as follows:

"Madam, our visit will be rendered more agreeable by our laying aside all unnecessary reserve and entering at once into the motives which bring us together. My greatest pleasure will be to assist your wishes to the extent of my ability, but one favour deserves another. The King regrets much the absence of the Duc d'Orleans, and will be pleased to see him again at Versailles; His Majesty reckons much upon your influence over the mind of that Prince to bring him again to the side of his Sovereign."

She replied that she would use her best endeavours to effect so desirable a measure, but that she did not, perhaps, possess with His Serene Highness that power which His Majesty and the rest of the Court attributed to her. Nevertheless, to forward the King's wishes, she would not shrink from appearing importunate in pressing the subject.

"And I on my side," I rejoined, "pledge myself to exert all the credit I possess to forward your wishes, if you do but succeed in bringing the Prince back to Court."

"But, madam," cried the Marquise de Montesson, with an air of playfulness, which was well assumed to conceal the importance she attached to her question, "would not your power extend so far as to obtain from His Majesty some written promise that I could show to the Duc d'Orleans—just to satisfy him that the King would repay him for the unpleasantness which his reappearance at Court would subject

him to? After the manner in which the Prince de Condé has been served, it is pretty evident that His Serene Highness would be served equally hard, and therefore it appears to me that when we propose such a series of annoyances to him, we should at least be prepared with some temptation to induce him to dare them."

"Listen, madam," I answered; "I am too candid by nature to be capable of holding out any false hope. The King has a great objection to binding himself by writing for any purpose. I can well attest the fact, for even in so momentous an affair as my presentation he would not, to promote a measure in which he took so great an interest, give any written assurances to any person; and whether I am blinded by self-love or guided by my intimate acquaintance with the character of the King, I think I may venture to affirm that what he would not do for me he certainly would not do for another. But, on the other hand, I am ready to sign with my own blood any promise which may serve to convince you of my extreme desire to forward your wishes."

"Your bare word is sufficient," answered Madame de Montesson, "and I trust to you entirely, begging you will give me credit for an equally anxious desire to oblige you."

"This is speaking to the purpose," cried the Maréchale de Mirepoix, who had hitherto been silent, "and I can certify to Madame de Montesson that the Comtesse du Barri is sincerity personified, and that her word is as good as a bond."

"Well, then," resumed Madame de Montesson, "either my name is not what it is, or His Serene Highness will pay his respects at Versailles before eight days are over his head."

She added many flattering expressions, and we separated delighted with each other.

Meanwhile the opposite party, already furious at the defection of the Prince de Condé, sought by every possible means to prevent the Duc d'Orleans from joining us; and who do you suppose was the principal agent in the business?

Why, a lady whom I had particularly distinguished with my favour, and had even exerted myself to reinstate in the good graces of His Majesty—no other than the Princesse de Beauvau. The Choiseuls reckoned greatly on her aid, and Madame de Grammont wrote to implore her to leave Lorraine (where she then was) as quickly as possible. The Princesse de Beauvau therefore returned to Paris, and in concert with the young Duc de Chartres, who already longed to render himself popular, endeavoured to confirm the Duc d'Orleans in his former resolutions. The Marquise de Montesson perceived that things were not proceeding favourably for our wishes, and fearing lest I might suspect her fidelity towards me, she wrote the following letter:

"DEAR MADAM,—I am truly grieved to find, after all the pains I have taken to evince my ardent desire of seconding your wishes, that so slender a prospect of success should present itself. I had made some little progress in the mind of His Serene Highness respecting a certain affair, but the presence of the Princesse de Beauvau has completely destroyed my work. Still, although dispirited, I am not discouraged; I know too well the respectful sentiments entertained by His Highness for the King. I shall redouble my zealous efforts, and trust that a few days may enable me to send you more satisfactory intelligence. Be assured you may as implicitly rely upon me as I do upon you.—Ever, my dear Countess, yours faithfully."

This letter gave me much pleasure. I showed it to the King, who said:

"Madame de Montesson is a charming woman."

"She is indeed, Sire," I replied, "and well worthy of a fitting reward for her upright behaviour."

"Stay a minute," cried Louis XV., "you do not allow me time to finish my remark. I was saying that the Marchioness was an excellent woman, but evidently an ambitious one."

"Nay," I said, "Your Majesty blames her somewhat unjustly. In her place I should act precisely as she does. She is a fitting match for a Prince of the Blood, and why should she not aspire to such a union? You must confess that she could not have made a better choice than she has done."

"I do not admire these alliances," answered Louis XV.; "they are replete with dissensions. I can never recognise

Madame de Montesson as Princesse d'Orleans, so that it can be at best but a left-handed marriage."

"Left-handed or right-handed," I cried, "it will be legal after it has received the priest's benediction."

"I admit that," replied the King; "but should this marriage produce them children, what rank will they be entitled to?"

"Never disturb yourself with that," I said, "it will be plenty of time when there are any children to provide for. All that is wanted at the present moment is Your Majesty's consent, which would set the conscience of the Prince quite at rest."

"Yes, madam," answered Louis XV., with an air of severity, "I understand you: they wish to sanctify their inclinations by the sacredness of the marriage tie."

I durst not reply to these words, which seemed to me intended as a reproach for my own ambitious projects. Tears of vexation stole down my cheeks, which the King perceiving instantly strove to dry up by promising his consent to the marriage of the Duc d'Orleans. I hastened to impart the joyful tidings to Madame de Montesson in the following note:

"MY DEAR MADAM,—I have been more successful in my undertaking than you have in yours, and victory has been more easily obtained at Versailles than at the Palais Royal. With the sincerest pleasure do I announce that His Majesty consents to the marriage so ardently desired by you. Be assured that I feel as much happiness in communicating this news as you will in receiving it.—Yours, my dear Madam," &c.

CHAPTER XXX

The Duc de Chartres—His letter to the Duc de Choiseul—The Duke's reply—The King's opinion of this correspondence—The adulteress and the sword—Madame de Noé.

FROM this moment Madame de Montesson, assured of my friendly disposition towards her, as well as of that of the King, resumed with fresh vigour the enterprise, the success of which would bring her so rich a reward. Still, we had to struggle against a powerful party, with the Duc de Chartres at its head. This young man most ardently desired to obtain the favourable opinion of the populace, and as they were directly opposed to us, he persecuted his father with orations and declamatory speeches against us. I took a mortal aversion to the young Prince from that period, and have ever considered him as my personal enemy; for which reason I shall be silent respecting him, as I might otherwise be led away by passion, and so be as unjust to him as he has been to me.

However, in spite of the efforts of the Duc de Chartres, the ascendency of Madame de Montesson was successful, and towards the close of the following year (1773) we had the satisfaction of again welcoming the Duc d'Orleans to Versailles. I am anticipating events in order to have done with the affair. This victory increased the fury of the cabal, which sought to depreciate the conduct of the Ducs de Condé and d'Orleans by magnifying and exalting the Duc de Chartres and the Prince de Conti, who persisted in their rebellious opposition. The former even indirectly protested against the authority of his father by publishing a

letter addressed to the Duc de Choiseul, couched in the following terms:

"My dear Duke,—I have not ventured earlier to ask the King's permission to visit you from the dread of a refusal; but, imagine my present joy when, at my first intimation of a wish to see you, His Majesty has left me fully at liberty to follow the bent of my own inclination. You know so well my friendship for yourself, and my sincere regard for Mesdames de Choiseul and de Grammont, that you will readily believe me when I affirm that the King could not have bestowed a more welcome privilege on me. I shall avail myself of His Majesty's permission (if you see no objection) the first week in Lent.

"I entreat of you to say to Madame de Choiseul and the Duchesse de Grammont how ardently I long to see them both, and that I flatter myself that they have preserved for me the same portion of their friendship I have hitherto had the happiness to possess.

"I remain, my dear Duke,

"Ever yours."

This letter was quickly circulated throughout the Castle. Louis XV. read it. "This is a bad specimen of epistolary elegance," he said. "When letters are intended to be made public, the style and diction should he more carefully attended to." All the persons present, consisting of the Princes de Poix and de Soubise, the Ducs de Duras and d'Aiguillon, with myself, re-echoed His Majesty's sentiments. The unfortunate letter was commented upon, analysed, taken to pieces, and formally adjudged to be vile, treasonable and detestable.

Louis XV., pleased with our unanimous accordance with his own view of the subject, proceeded to speak further. "This young man," he said, "is making a wrong beginning. He is evidently bent upon courting popularity, and beneath this apparent heedlessness he conceals a powerful ambition. I will watch carefully over him, and recommend my grandson to do the same."

At these words, which were uttered in a more serious tone than the rest, we all looked at each other in deep silence. The King appeared conscious of having gone too far. "After all," said he, laughing, "how wrong it is to be carried away by the feelings of the moment. Merely because a young man writes a letter I do not happen to approve of, I immediately set him down as another Gaston. But come, let us

read the Duc de Choiseul's reply. I am told it is very prudently worded, and that does not astonish me. The Duke has learnt wisdom by this, no doubt." His Majesty then read as follows:

"My Lord,—My first impulse upon receiving yesterday evening the letter with which Your Serene Highness has honoured me was to express my sense of the flattering condescension which dictated it, and to give myself up to the delightful anticipation of your promised visit. But, as reflection pointed out to me the consequences which might probably attend such a line of conduct on the part of Your Highness, as well as the extreme care and circumspection requisite for my own observance, considering the delicate circumstances under which I am placed, it appeared to me that the public testimony of friendship and regard which you proposed to show me would only draw down unfavourable conjectures and injurious conclusions at Court.

"When our gracious Sovereign left you at liberty to come hither, it had not, in all probability, occurred to him that it was derogatory to the respect due to himself to permit a Prince of the Blood to hold any communication with a disgraced individual. It might happen, my lord, that some of His Majesty's advisers may suggest to him that Your Serene Highness ought not to have demanded such a permission; and it might be ascribed a fault in you to have solicited the favour, as well as improper on my part to have profited by it.

"These, my lord, are reflections which I submit with equal pain and regret to Your Serene Highness. Mesdames de Choiseul and de Grammont, who partake of my feelings on the subject, trust that, in more fortunate circumstances, we may, without fear or alarm, enjoy the favour and friendship you are pleased to offer us. We all beg to acknowledge, with the deepest sense of your goodness, the flattering compliment paid us by Your Serene Highness.

"Entreating your acceptance of our united prayers and good wishes,

"I have the honour to remain," &c.

"Very good," cried the King, when the letter was concluded. "You see the Duc de Choiseul knows his place perfectly well, and not his bitterest foe can detect one improper sentence throughout his whole letter."

For my own part I rejoice at having finished mentioning the Duc de Chartres. I now return to the year 1772.

One evening the King, with an air of extreme agitation, entered the room where I was sitting. I hastily enquired if he were ill.

"No, no," he answered; "I am well, but I have just been made the depositary of so singular a secret that it has quite unmanned me."

"Is it a State affair?" I asked.

"It is not," Louis XV. replied; "and if you will promise me to keep it with discretion, I will relate the affair to you."

I promised inviolable silence, and the King thus began:

"I was in my cabinet when the Marquis de C—— sent to request the favour of an interview. I replied that I was too much engaged to see any person; upon which he sent a note by Chamilly, stating that his life depended upon my granting the audience he had solicited. Whether from a feeling of kindness towards the Marquis or a desire to know what the important business could be which rendered him so pressing in his desire to see me, I gave orders for his admission. You know that he occupies apartments in the Castle. He appeared before me with a distorted countenance, wild, haggard looks, and his whole person exhibiting the most miserable perturbation. The sight of him in such distress filled me with amazement; but ere I had time to question him, he fell upon his knees before me, exclaiming, 'Sire, I bring you my head. I am guilty of a frightful crime, and it is for you to decide my fate.' My astonishment redoubled at these words; however, I entreated of the Marquis to explain himself. He then proceeded to state that, suspecting the fidelity of his wife, he had watched her, and having been confirmed in his suspicions by means of an intercepted letter, which informed him that she had formed a new connection with a young *garde de corps* recently arrived from one of the provinces, and that a meeting was to take place between the guilty lovers in the apartment of one of the footmen, he had followed them thither, and having forced his way into the chamber where the wretched wife and her paramour were concealed, he had plunged his sword into the body of each. The Marquis flew from the horrid scene to make the confession of his guilt to me; I must own," continued the King, "that I was wholly at a loss how to answer him. However, I summoned Chamilly and desired him to take the necessary precautions for preventing any exposure of the affair. It proved that the *garde de corps* alone had perished, Madame de C—— having escaped with a slight wound. The corpse was left in the chamber, and it will be removed in a box to-night. The lady was

conducted almost dead with grief and shame to an adjoining room, where she will remain until her wound is healed."

I enquired of the King what would be the consequences of this affair. He replied that the Marchioness would be confined for life in a convent, but that the Marquis would experience no prosecution in consequence of what he had done. "For," said Louis XV., "his case seems to me very excusable, and I have no doubt our laws would readily extend their pardon to him; for surely if we are permitted to kill a man who dares to strike or insult us, how much more are we justified in chastising the despoiler of our honour."

Louis XV. was continually meeting with the most extraordinary events. He once showed me a letter written by a lady of quality who lived in Normandy. This abominable mother informed the King that she had four daughters of surpassing beauty, and that it would make her but too happy to see one of them honoured by his notice and acceptance.

"What a parent!" I exclaimed.

The King smiled. "My sweet friend," he said, "does that surprise you? What would you say if I could prove, by indubitable facts, that from my earliest youth there has not been a young female possessed of any personal attractions who has not been offered me either directly or indirectly. For instance, the uncle of her who is to be a bride in the coming week has pointed her out to my notice more than a dozen times. I can assure you that since I have been King I have never met with a truly virtuous female. Hold! I do recollect *one*, but that is now twenty years since. I had heard much talk of the surpassing loveliness of a lady named Noé, and I took it into my head to write to her. She replied with much sense, and an equal share of prudent circumspection. I became more pressing, she more reserved. I employed prayers, promises, entreaties—all were in vain; and, after keeping up a four years' correspondence with this lady, finding I was not likely to bring the matter to a conclusion, I gave it up."

When the King had finished speaking, I said to him:

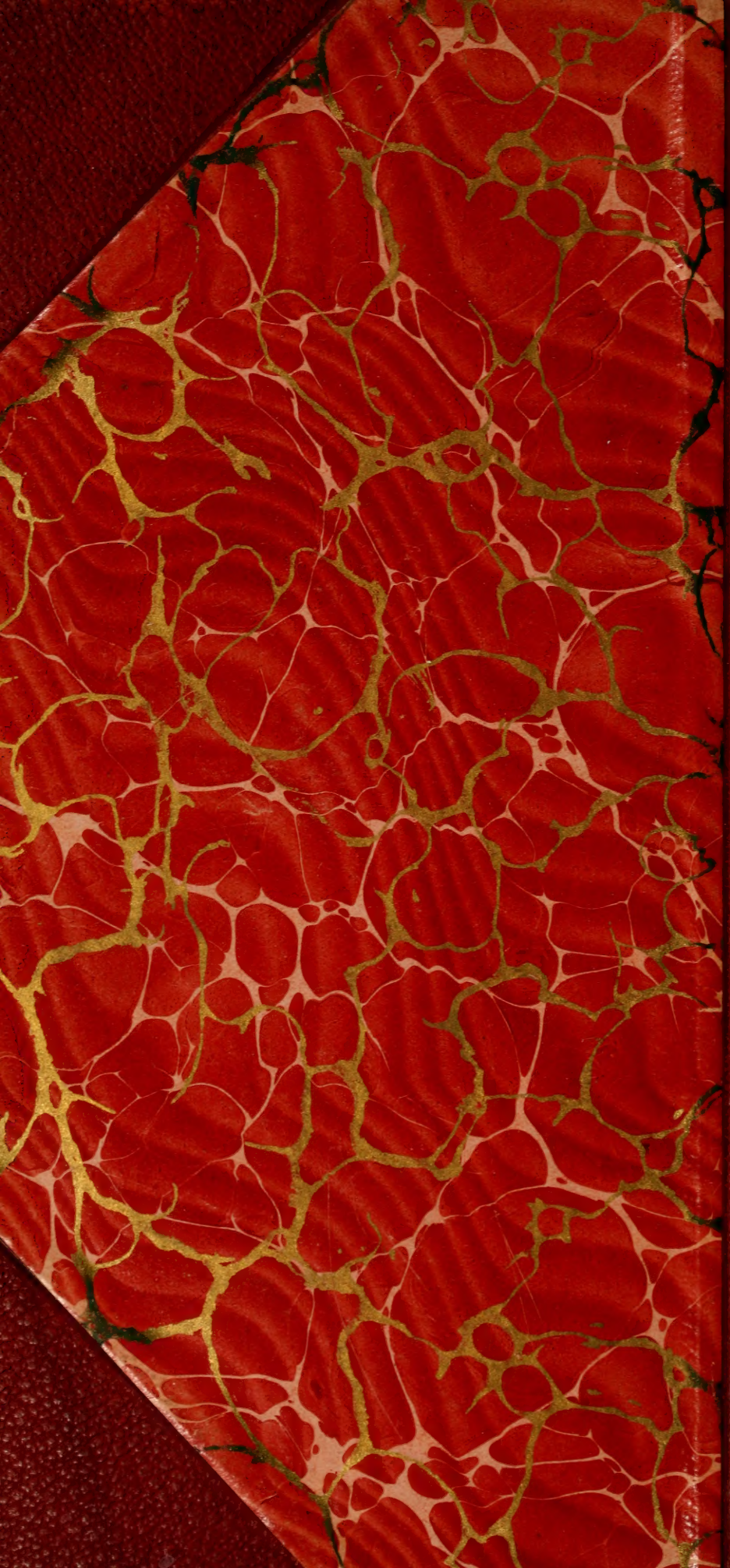
"You teach me more than I knew; but still I am

astonished at nothing I hear at Court. However, I will tell you something in my turn that will be as new to you, and will most certainly excite your astonishment. Would you believe that the horrors of the Inquisition are carried on during your reign?"

"Excellent!" Louis XV. exclaimed; "and where, my fair Countess, did you pick up that appalling tale?"

"It is no imaginary tale, Sire," I answered. "This memorial will abundantly satisfy you as to the truth of what I assert."

Upon which I put into the King's hand a memorial from the President d'Orbesson, demanding that the Royal exchequer should no longer pay the salary of the Grand Inquisitor resident at Toulouse, by virtue of the institution of the tribunal of the Holy Office in the time of the crusade against the Albigenses.

The King perused this memorial, and caused the Comptroller-General to be summoned. This officer, who chanced to be at Versailles at the time, received the necessary orders for stopping the salary of the Grand Inquisitor. This was to abolish the office altogether; for in France, as in most other countries, people do not particularly admire gratuitous avocations.

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